

TRIBAL UNREST ON THE SOUTH-WEST FRONTIER  
OF THE BENGAL PRESIDENCY, 1831<sup>18</sup>-33.

by

Jagdish Chandra Jha

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to study the tribal unrest of 1831-33 on the south-west frontier of Bengal in all its aspects - its origins, progress, pacification, nature and aftermath. There are two distinct phases of this unrest - the first among the Mundas, the Oraons and other tribal people of Chota-Nagpur, which eventually spread among the Bhumijes of Patkum in the east, and among the Cheros and the Kharwars of Palaman in the west; the second among the Bhumijes of the Jungle Mahals and of Dhalbhum in the Midnapur district. Where clarity requires the two phases are studied separately.

The thesis is in nine chapters. Chapter one deals with the penetration of the British into the jungle covered hills of Midnapur and Burdwan districts, and with the early risings and disturbances in these areas.

Chapter two is concerned with the British connection with the Ramgarh district. As in chapter one the geography, the anthropology and political history of the area are outlined, and the effects of a complex alien administration upon a tribal society are examined.

In chapter three the outbreak, progress and suppression of the first phase of the unrest, that in



Chota-Nagpur, Palamau and Patkum, is described.

Chapter four analyses the circumstances which led to that rising.

Chapter five turns to the outbreak and progress of the second phase of the unrest, in the Jungle Mahals, and the civil and military operations by which order was restored are described.

Chapter six again provides an analysis of the immediate origins of the rising, and traces the important feuds within the ruling family.

Chapter seven examines the nature of the risings by a consideration of the type of victims chosen for attack.

Chapter eight deals with the measures taken to restore order and to solve the immediate problems created by the risings.

Chapter nine reviews the major re-organisation of the tribal areas into a Non--Regulation Agency.



## Introduction

This thesis presents a case study of the evil consequences of introducing into an undeveloped tribal area a complex, legalistic administrative system. That system was the regulation-bound Cornwallis system developed for the plains areas of the Bengal presidency. The political, social and economic impact upon the Kols and Bhumijes of that system, introduced without discrimination and without due supervision forms the major part of this study. Tribal society was already feeling the unhappy effects of the hinduization and alienation of the tribal rajas and zamindars of the area, when the British penetration began. Both impacts were therefore felt at once, and both introduced foreign notions and foreign people into the area, in an influx which led eventually to the economic ruin of the people. The tribal unrest of 1831-1833 was a crude form of protest against these changes and these outside influences. It was a gesture of despair.

In the course of their risings the tribal people were guilty of most heinous crimes, of banditry, murder and arson. But they knew no other method of effective social protest. "Social banditry, a universal and virtually unchanging phenomenon, is little more than



endemic peasant protest against <sup>ression</sup> ~~opposition~~ and poverty: a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them, a righting of individual wrongs. Its ambitions are modest: a traditional world in which men are justly dealt with."<sup>1</sup>

O'Malley wrote in 1917 that "one of the most fascinating but least known chapters in the history of British rule in this part [Bengal Presidency] of India is the pacification of semi-savage races and the conversion of restless marauders into quiet cultivators."<sup>2</sup>

O'Malley's unspoken assumption was that the exasperating phenomenon of recurrent unrest in the area was due merely to some inherent tendency in the Kols and other tribal people to be marauders and semi-savage. He failed to realize that the tribal leaders, whose actions punctuated the otherwise smooth story of the development of British India, were in their own society the equivalent of Robinhood or Rob Roy, rebels against landlords, bailiffs, merchants and usurers who were exploiting the tribal people. If their movements were "blind and groping"

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<sup>1</sup> Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, 13

<sup>2</sup> O'Malley, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, sikkim, 154. Also see his History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under British rule, 668.



that was because they were the movements of peasant protestants, extremely inarticulate, not knowing how to express their legitimate grievances.

But there was such a force in their protest that the whole machinery of government in this area had to be overhauled. It is this force, ferment or turmoil which makes this study significant and interesting.

Not much literature has so far been produced on this subject. Most of the 19th century British historians did not even touch upon it in their books. They invariably painted Lord Bentinck's Governor-Generalship as a peaceful regime.<sup>1</sup> Those who did mention it were either professional historians or the servants of the East India Company and later of the Crown. Naturally enough, though they had spent a considerable time in India, and unlike Mill, knew some of India's languages and peoples, they were concerned more with what the British did to civilise these so-called 'marauders' and 'bandits' who, they thought, put obstacles in the path of Pax Britannica, than to show how their own culture was destroyed by British pressures.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Lyall, Rise and Expansion of British dominion in India  
 Boulger, Lord William Bentinck  
 Beveridge, Comprehensive History of India, 1862.  
 Campbell, Modern India, 1852.  
 Gleig, History of the British Empire, 1830-1835



Thus, Edward Thornton, who devotes less than three pages to the first phase of this unrest in the <sup>first</sup> ~~first~~ volume of his book, written in 1841, describes these tribal people as rioters<sup>1</sup> "These disturbances themselves," he asserts, "would scarcely deserve notice, were it not that they afford additional evidence of the constant tendency of the wilder portion of the subjects of the British government in India to break loose from the restraints of law and order, and to return to a state where the hand of every man is against his neighbour".<sup>2</sup>

Horace Hayman Wilson, the great Orientalist who had spent a quarter of a century in the Company's service in India, dealt with this subject in about a dozen pages in his edition of Mill's History of British India.<sup>3</sup> He also, in a typical imperialist's or administrator's tone, mentions this demonstration "of turbulence and disaffection" "as characteristic of the temper and feelings of the people"<sup>4</sup> He admits that the causes of this episode

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<sup>1</sup> History of British India, V, 203.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 203.

<sup>3</sup> He extended the work of Mill beyond 1805.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, History of British India, 5th Ed., IX, 220-221.



are "not easy to trace", and yet he thinks that "when the powers of the [Political] agent were curtailed, and the troops on the frontier reduced, the "barbarous tribes relapsed into the indulgence of their former propensities..."<sup>1</sup> He does not take into account any legitimate grievances of these tribal people.

True, between 1868 and 1917 E.T.Dalton, W.W.Hunter, H.H.Risley, Bradley-Birt and O'Malley did take an interest in the tribal problem. Dalton, Risley and Bradley-Birt had served in Chota-Nagpur. But most of them were interested in the ethnographical and anthropological aspects only. They did not consult the original sources, because they had no wish to present an historical account of the area. Even Sir W.W.Hunter, who compiled the Imperial Gazetteer of India and the Statistical Account of Bengal and O'Malley who prepared some of the Bengal District Gazetteers did not devote more than a few pages to this subject.

None of them went to the primary sources, not even to the contemporary newspapers. They had administrator's prejudices against the tribal people who

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 231-232.



had occasionally revolted. Moreover, they had only the British readers in mind. Since they also looked at things with western standards and values, they lacked the sympathy towards the tribal agitators.

Even the Cambridge History of India, "the most solid work of British historical scholarship on India", and V.A.Smith's first "adequate textbook on history of India" paid attention only to the political, diplomatic and administrative problems.<sup>1</sup> They were concerned only with what the British were doing there, and the problem as seen from the tribal side is conspicuous by its absence.

Some Indian writers, like S.C.Roy, have tried to present the tribal point of view. Their greatest limitation was the lack of access to the original records. Thus, Roy either quoted from secondary sources or relies on folk-lore and hearsay, which though a guide to sentiment, is not a safe guide to actual events.

After Independence, and especially in the wake of the Centenary celebrations of the Indian mutiny of 1857, several Indian writers have tried to discuss this

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips, C.H. 'British Historical Writing on India', Listener, 8 Dec. 1955.



subject.<sup>1</sup> But they have invariably treated it as a political movement, and as a part of the general freedom struggle against the British. None of them treat the tribal versus non-tribal aspect of this unrest, and by emphasizing the anti-British aspect of the struggle, they produce a lop-sided view of the unrest. None of them have consulted the original records and contemporary newspapers. Moreover, some of these, being Government-sponsored works, do not give adequate space to this subject.

Chaudhury has described this unrest in five pages as part of the civil disturbances against the British rule. He draws analogies between the Pax Britannica and Pax Romana.<sup>2</sup> He makes sweeping remarks, e.g. "the British occupation of Singhbhum naturally generated tensions and fears which eventually merged with the Kol rebellion of 1832-32".<sup>3</sup> But he never cares to distinguish between the tribal and non-tribal sentiments. He completely ignores the hinduization of the tribal chiefs

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<sup>1</sup> Chaudhury, S.B., Civil Disturbances during the British rule, 1955.

Datta, K.K. Unrest against British rule, 1957.

- History of Freedom Movement in Bihar, vol. I, 1957.

Diwar, R.R. (ed.), Bihar through the Ages, 1958.

Roychondhury, P.C., Eighteen Fiftyseven in Chota Nagpur, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> Chaudhury, Civil disturbances, 'Approach to the subject'.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 98



and its repercussions. Moreover, he does not take into account the moods and tendencies<sup>†</sup> these simple tribal folk, preferring to follow purely Marxist lines.

In a word, no objective and complete treatment of the subject has been undertaken so far. This thesis aims to present a more exact and balanced picture, in a complete form. It is hoped that both the extremes of derision and over-patriotism will be avoided: in the British historical writing on the subject words like 'marauder', 'lower order', 'bandit', chuar etc. vie with one another, while in the recent Indian works 'gallant story', 'hero', etc., are frequently used.

It is perhaps unusual, but not necessarily improper, to add here a personal note. My interest in the tribal unrest was aroused very early in my childhood, because my village has been a storm-centre of such a struggle between the tribal (Santhal and Oraon) tillers of the soil and the non-tribal landlords.<sup>1</sup> Later in my college days I became interested in the 'Jharkhand'<sup>2</sup> and the 'Tana Bhagat'<sup>3</sup> movement of Chota-Nagpur. Then during the

<sup>1</sup> In 1939 several non-tribal people were killed in a clash with the Santhals.

<sup>2</sup> A separatist movement under Jaipal Singh, demanding a separate state.

<sup>3</sup> It has a religious background. Another recent movement is the Kharwar movement. Only three years back one Phetal Singh of the Palamau district, with an idea of forming a separate Kharwar pocket, created terror in the area before he was arrested and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.



preparation of the History of Freedom Movement in Bihar  
I came across materials dealing with the area and in  
1957-1959 I published three papers.

The period chosen, as will be seen, does not lack  
for materials: it also does not lack importance or a  
coherent unity of theme. In 1831 what is now Chota-  
Nagpur did not exist as an administrative unit, its  
territories were parcelled out among half a dozen  
jurisdictions - and in all of them received but scant  
attention. Yet by 1831 the grievances of the tribal  
people in all the districts were approaching flash point  
- a casual incident might lead to an explosion. In the  
next two years, the explosion having taken place first  
in Chota-Nagpur and then in the Jungle Mahals, the Bengal  
administration was compelled not only to take action to  
restore order, but also to think about the causes of the  
unrest. In 1834, with order restored, a radical  
administrative reorganization took place, by which a  
new unit, the South-West Frontier Agency, was created  
from previously scattered districts, and a new Non-  
Regulation, paternalist government was installed.  
Thereafter for some twenty years the area knew a  
hitherto unaccustomed peace under a sympathetic  
administration. Had that care for tribal interests been



maintained, had the lessons of the outbreak been truly learnt, the agrarian disturbances of the second half of the 19th century might well have been avoided.

The use of words like 'aboriginal', 'scheduled tribes', etc., has been purposely avoided, because some of them are words of derision, while others have been recently coined, and cannot be applied to the people who rose in 1831-1833.

For the sake of an independent, critical and complete study, the Government records, private papers, newspapers and magazines have been used in combination, and it is hoped that a complete and satisfactory picture and a revaluation of the policies and events of this period may have emerged. It may, in course of time, lead to the treatment of the subject in a larger perspective.

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## CHAPTER I.

### The Jungle Mahals and Dhalbum in the Early British Period.

The tragic drama to be described in this thesis was enacted on what geographers call the Chota-Nagpur plateau. This plateau,<sup>1</sup> in effect an extension of the great Vindhyan range, rises from some eight or ten hundred feet in the south-east to a height of three thousand six hundred feet in the west, with occasional peaks such as Pārasnath reaching well over four thousand feet. It is a temperate area of hills and valleys<sup>2</sup> densely clothed with forest - from which it received the name 'Jharkhand', the forest tract. The rugged hills and dense forests, the precipitous approaches to the occasional difficult passes<sup>3</sup> make the country a natural fortress: "the approaches to it from the North, North-West, East and South, are exceedingly precipitous, the paths winding up defiles

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1. Imperial Gazetteer of India, 3rd Ed., X, 328-329: "The word 'plateau' is used, for want of a better designation, for this tract of elevated country, and is not intended to imply that the area referred to forms an open table-land like that to the north of Cape Colony. There are three plateaux in the stricter acceptation of the term .... Elsewhere the country is often very broken, and numerous ranges or grounds of steep hills are intersected by deep ravines and occasionally by open valleys."
  2. Sir J. Houlton, Bihar, 126: "Chota-Nagpur can fairly claim to be one of the most attractive parts of the Indian peninsula. For five or six months of the year, from October onwards, the days are sunny ... and the nights cool .... In April and May the temperature may pass the 100 mark, but the nights are much cooler than in the plains..."
  3. A. Drummond in his manuscript Statistical Account of the Hazaribagh Division ..., P.1, writes "These passes, intersecting more or less every path of approach, renders access to the territory extremely difficult, offering abundant impediment to the progress of any regular invading military force."

which a handful of resolute men could hold against hosts of invaders."<sup>1</sup>

The actors on this stage were tribal peoples who had here found "a secure asylum".<sup>2</sup> Its inviolability they maintained throughout the period of Hindu and Muslim empires. Thus Chaitanya, the great Vaishnava apostle of Bengal, passing through the area in 1509, described the tribal folk as "pirates gathered on the rivers and robbers on the land."<sup>3</sup> Tavernier wrote of his journey from Rohtasgarh to Sambhalpur (in the 1640's): "These thirty Coss traverse forests which are dangerous, because the thieves ... attack them [the travellers and merchants] sometimes for the purpose of murdering them."<sup>4</sup> The expeditions against the area by Sher Shah<sup>5</sup> and by Akbar and his successors never completely subjugated the area.<sup>6</sup> The political disorders which accompanied the break-up of the Mughal empire at the hands of Afghans and Marathas made any further attempt to subdue the plateau area impossible, and indeed laid the surrounding districts open to the depredations of the hill tribes. Thus in Ali Vardi Khan's day they used his preoccupation with Maratha incursions to descend from the hills and interrupt the trade

1. E.T.Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, 164.

2. Ibid. 163.

3. D.G.Midnapore, 22.

4. Transl. V.Ball, Tavernier's Travels, II.

5. D.G.Ranchi, 25.

6. J.C.Price, Notes on the History of Midnapore, 68, describes the efforts of Todar Mal to curb the hill people. Also see Gokhale, Manbhum Settlement Report, Para.35.

between Bengal and the west,<sup>1</sup> and as late as 1796 the English Magistrate at Burdwan had to ask for additional troops to be posted to protect the Bishnupur district "against banditti coming down the passes" from chhatna and other parganas and "jungles westward of Bishenpore Districts."<sup>2</sup>

As the power of the East India Company was extended in the late eighteenth century the first contacts were made with the tribal peoples of the plateau area. In 1760 the Company acquired from Mir Kasim the territories later to be known as the Jungle Mahals, and Dhalbhum in the Midnapur district. But no attempt was made to exert political control over the western part of the new acquisitions, valued though they were for their trade in silk, lac and other jungle products. Rather the chiefs, confident in the strength of their hills, and their mud-forts, refused to pay any revenue to the East India Company.

In 1765 the grant by Emperor Shah Alam II of the Diwani of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa confirmed the Company's rights over the area granted by Mir Kasim, and added to the company's territories Chota-Nagpur with its dependent parganas, together with the other tribal areas, Ramgarh, Palamau and Pachet, which had been included within the boundaries of the Mughal subah of Bihar.

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1. In 1767 the Midnapur resident wrote that these Jungle zamindars obstructed the commerce between Bengal and "the districts westward of the hills": Graham to Fergusson, 30 Jan. 1767, Firminger, Midnapur Dist. Records, I, No.109.
  2. Burdwan Magistrate to Govt., 12 Jan. 1796, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 27 of 5 Feb. 1796 ( $\frac{128}{27}$ )



It was in 1767 that the British penetration of the hill areas began, when Graham, the Resident at Midnapur, with Calcutta's approval,<sup>1</sup> despatched a military force under Ensign Fergusson to subjugate the jungle zamindars to the west of Midnapur. He was instructed not only to secure reparations for robberies committed by the zamindar of Phulkusmā,<sup>2</sup> but to begin the process of assessing the jungle districts to revenue.<sup>3</sup>

His task was not an easy one. He had to begin by attacking and capturing the fort of the Jhargram chief.<sup>4</sup> Certain of the zamindars then submitted - Ramgarh, Samkakulia (Lalgarh, Jambani and Jatbani (Silda),<sup>5</sup> and he was able to push on to Balarampur thana and secure further submissions from the chiefs of Amainagar (Ambikanagar) Supur, Manbhum,<sup>6</sup> Chhatna, Barabhum, Raipur and Phulkusmā, even though the last two had long defied the Burdwan authorities.<sup>7</sup> But though they submitted in the presence of military force, several of them had put forward a variety of reasons for not paying revenue. Thus the Ambikanagar Chief had pleaded that his country had been twice plundered, first by a freebooter

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1. H. Verelst to J. Graham, Midnapur Resident, 17 March 1766, Firminger, op.cit. No.60.
  2. Graham to Fergusson, 4 Feb. 1767, Ibid. No.117.
  3. Graham to Fergusson, 30 Jan. 1767, Ibid. No.109.
  4. Fergusson to Graham, 7 Feb. 1767, Ibid. No.120.
  5. Fergusson to Graham, 14 Feb. 1767, Ibid. Nos. 124-125: Total revenue assessed was Rs.2814-11-6.
  6. Fergusson to Graham, 20 Feb. 1767, Ibid. No.129. Fergusson sent Pan (betel) as a token of friendship to these three chiefs: Ibid. No.130.
  7. Fergusson to Graham, 6 March 1767, Ibid. No.139: Final settlement with these five zamindars.

named Damodar Singh and then by the Company's troops which had been sent to capture him.<sup>1</sup> The Barabhum zamindar had pleaded a like poverty caused by the incursion of the Company's sepoys, who, acting on behalf of his rival the Pachet raja, had plundered his villages.<sup>2</sup> (Fergusson was in fact shocked to see the ill effects of the wanton plundering of the suspects' property by the troops which had been sent from Bishnupur in pursuit of Damodar Singh. The ryots everywhere fled from their villages as he and his troops advanced<sup>3</sup>). By the beginning of March Fergusson had reached Supur in safety and had secured the nominal submission of the zamindars along the line of his advance. For the moment he could breathe easily. As he wrote to Graham at Midnapur, "... to have pursued each separately would have been a work of time, and to have divided my force would have rendered my success doubtful, as none of those zemindars by our best intelligence have less than 2,000 people in their pergunnaas whose trade is war."<sup>4</sup>

Fergusson was conscious, however, that the tribal chiefs had by no means been thoroughly subdued. Unless a permanent force were established in the area, the collection of the revenue would be difficult,<sup>5</sup> even though what they had agreed to pay was little more than a nominal tribute than a

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1. Fergusson to Graham, 20 Feb. [incorrectly printed as 10 Feb.] 1767, Ibid. No.129.

2. Ibid. No.129.

3. Fergusson to G.Vansittart, 26 Jan. 1768, Midnapur Dist. Records, II, No.299.

4. Fergusson to Graham, 6 March 1767, Midnapur Dist. Records, I No.139.

5. Fergusson to Graham, 14 March 1767, Ibid. No.150.

regular revenue settlement.<sup>1</sup> (As the terms of their Kabuliats show, none of them submitted any detailed accounts of their assets before the revenue demand was fixed). He hoped, however, that they might be persuaded to adopt a more settled life: "by trading in these articles [forest products such as lac], and by tilling their lands" he hoped they might benefit themselves and lead a happier life "than by addicting themselves to theft and robbery", as they were doing.<sup>2</sup> Once they had changed their ways he had good hopes of increasing the revenue and very considerably too "to judge from the face of the country and appearance of the people."<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile he was faced by the refusal of the chief of Ghatshila (Dhalbhum) to submit.<sup>4</sup> The chief had been busy preparing for a struggle, while Fergusson was advancing to Supur, and he had destroyed the roads and felled trees to block the passes leading to his zamindari.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he had been joined by Damodar Singh, that Rob Roy of the area, and other tribal chiefs. When Fergusson sent his envoys to the raja they were turned back by a force of 150 bowmen. He had, therefore, to fight his way through some 16 miles of

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1. The author of the Manbhum Settlement Report, Para.37, notes that "Barahabhum and other estates which were first assessed got off very lightly, whereas Jhalda, Katras, Jharia, Nawagarh and other estates which were taken up later on when the British control had been considerably strengthened, had to submit to a comparatively heavy assessment." This settlement was confirmed by Higginson in 1776.
  2. Fergusson to Graham, 14 Feb. 1767, Firminger, op.cit.I, No.124.
  3. Fergusson to Graham, 14 March 1767, Ibid. No.150.
  4. Fergusson to Graham, 14 Feb. 1767, Ibid. No.124.
  5. Fergusson to Graham, 16 Feb. 1767, Ibid. No.127.

jungle, and storm the Ghatshila fort (22 March 1767).<sup>1</sup> Even then the raja did not submit, but turned into the hills leaving Fergusson with the difficult task of managing the estate: "There are none of the zemindars along with me who will undertake the charge of this purgana, notwithstanding (from the froward ...[and] barbarous conduct of the Run-away) the probability of gaining over the country people."<sup>2</sup> Fergusson was determined not to re-install the runaway zamindar—he had been faithless to treaties, a great disturber of peace and "a great nuisance to his neighbours."<sup>3</sup>

Early in April Fergusson surprised the Ghatshila zamindar, took the old man prisoner and sent him under heavy escort to Midnapur.<sup>4</sup> In his place he installed his nephew Jagannath Dhal,<sup>5</sup> thinking the problem thereby solved. But by August Fergusson had to report the rebellion of the nephew, and the acts of social banditry of other "robber chiefs" of the area.<sup>6</sup> He realized that strong measures would be necessary, and though with the approach of the rains the grass was

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1. Fergusson to Graham, 22 March 1767, Ibid. No.157. On 4 April 1767 (Ibid. No.167) he described the fort as "situated on a plain surrounded with jungle. Its area nearly 1158 square feet. It has a rampart of very bad earth, or rather gravel..., but the ditch is excellent, being forty two feet wide and 18 feet high to the level without ...."
  2. Fergusson to Graham, 22 March 1767, Ibid. No.157.
  3. Fergusson to Graham, 22 March 1767, Ibid. No.158.
  4. Fergusson to Vansittart, the Resident, 9 April 1767, Ibid. No.171.
  5. Ibid. No.171. On 20 Feb. 1767 (Ibid. No.129) he had reported that he wanted to take advantage of the rift between the Ghatshila zamindar and his nephew and heir. Then on 24 March he had written that many people in Ghatshila had assured him that they would support the nephew if he was installed. (Ibid. No.159.)
  6. Fergusson to Vansittart, 2 Aug. 1767, Ibid. No.235.

long through which his army and guns had to march, the bowmen galled the soldiers, and the water in the fort-ditch at Ghatshila rendered an entrance into the fort difficult,<sup>1</sup> with two companies of troops he captured the fort, and the zamindar surrendered.<sup>2</sup>

This surrender at Ghatshila in August 1767, had been preceded by the spontaneous coming in of the zamindars of Patkum and Singhbhum, and of the Chhatna zamindar, All three were anxious to secure British protection against the depredations of their neighbours, indeed the Chhatna zamindar declared that he would rather "quit the country and starve than become a vessel [sic] of Patchaast."<sup>3</sup> Fergusson was ready, by granting protection to promote "the plan of civilizing and familiarizing the country people to our Government," the more readily in Chhatna because the inhabitants were, in comparison with their neighbours, as he put it, "a polished set, few or no Pikes [paik or ghatwals], abundance of riots [ryots] and petty merchants."<sup>4</sup>

Fergusson remained settling western Midnapur for the rest of 1767, feeling some confidence that matters were at last improving. 1768, however, showed how wrong he had been. In January he had to resettle Manbhum.<sup>5</sup> In Chhatna he had great difficulty in collecting the revenue because there the taluks were full of the blood and marriage relations of the

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1. Ibid.No.235.

2. Fergusson to Vansittart, 22 Aug.1767, Ibid. No.246.

3. Fergusson to Vansittart, 7 June,1767, Ibid. No.202.

4. Fergusson to Vansittart, 26 Jan.1768, Midnapur Dist. Records,II, No.299.

5. Fergusson to Vansittart, 6 Jan.1768, Ibid. No.288.

zamindar who had rarely paid revenues, and resisted even the lightest assessment. The yakil, whose formal promises on the revenue collections had been broken, was subjected to corporal punishment, the diwan had to give a written promise, the zamindar himself was severely admonished.<sup>1</sup> To cap all, in mid-1768 trouble was renewed in Ghatshila. The raja, in arrears, evaded compliance with the residents' commands and again prepared to bid for independence.<sup>2</sup>

Two companies of sepoy were despatched to re-establish British authority, and remove the advisers of the zamindar. The attempt to surprise the raja failed, the paiks remained in arms, while the Ghatshila chief, with all his principal sardars took refuge some twenty kos from his fort.<sup>3</sup> His dependant chiefs followed his example, and Captain Morgan was soon declaring, of the most troublesome of these, "the Dampara fellow," a bad character by all reports, "I intend his head shall grace the entrance of this fort."<sup>4</sup>

The threat was easier made than executed. One sergeant's detachment sent to seize the petty zamindar of Chuckolea (chukula) found the path heavily stockaded and used half their ammunition in forcing the obstructions. Other bodies of troops were similarly harassed, and their headquarters, the Narsinggarh fort, was several times attacked.

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1. Fergusson to Vansittart, 26 Jan. 1768, Ibid. No. 299.
  2. Vansittart to R. Becher, Coll. General, 1 June 1768, Ibid. No. 348.
  3. C. Morgan to Vansittart, 8 July 1768, Ibid. No. 359.
  4. Ibid. He also realized the difficulty of his task: "It is all a joke to talk of licking these jungle Fellows: they have not the least idea of fighting, they are like a parcel of wasps: they endeavour to sting you with their arrows, and then fly off. It is impossible almost to kill any of them, as they always keep at a great distance and fling their arrows at you..."

By July Morgan was sending for one of the new six-pounders to overawe the rebels.<sup>1</sup>

Neither military action, nor the supercession of the Ghatshila Raja Jagannath Dhal by his brother Nimu Dhal, ordered by Vansittart, the Midnapur Resident,<sup>2</sup> proved of much use. The zamindars drove their cattle before them into the jungle, and from behind the swollen rivers were able to defy the troops, who found provisions almost impossible to obtain. By late July Morgan had to admit that he was finding it a more difficult job to settle the country, than it was at first to conquer it, and was suggesting that it might be better to re-instate Jagannath Dhal. His younger brother had not the necessary authority to collect the revenues, the sardars would not come in out of fear, and with rivers unfordable it was impossible to coerce them.<sup>3</sup> "I wish to God," Morgan wrote, "this business was over, for I am really tired of doing nothing, and my poor sepoy's fall sick continually. I have now above sixty men ill of fever. One of my lascars died a day or two ago, and Mr. Flint is very ill, be so good as to send me a large quantity of ginger, as I find tea made out of it to be very good for the sickmen."<sup>4</sup>

The difficulties were very great. Morgan rightly foresaw that further military operations would send the people of the country running "to the Devil,"<sup>5</sup> and so make a revenue

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1. Ibid. No.359.

2. Vansittart to Becher, Coll.General, 28 July 1768, Ibid. No.372.

3. Morgan to Vansittart, 16 July 1768, Ibid. No.368.

4. Morgan to Vansittart, 25 July 1768, Ibid. No.374.

5. Morgan to Vansittart, 30 July 1768, Ibid. No.376.

settlement still more difficult to achieve, and that if the sardars were behind the old raja it would be many months' work, in such difficult country, to bring them in. The Marathas were making suspicious moves, and the Bamanghati zamindar, and his overlord the Raja of Mayurbhanj were supporting the Ghatshila Chief.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Morgan persisted with his military operations, ferried three of his five companies over the river in a boat which leaked profusely, set his cavalry - a shocking set of dogs - in pursuit, ignored the monsoon, the jungle, the difficulty with provisions,<sup>2</sup> and by the end of September he had restored order in the estate. Even so when Vansittart visited the western parganas early in 1769 he found them very sparsely inhabited and their agriculture neglected.<sup>3</sup>

There followed almost a year of calm in the jungle parganas - a year's lull before the storm. Towards the end of 1769, the chuars, (tribal people, especially Bhumijes) living between the parganas of Dhalbhum and Barabhum, were in turmoil and Vansittart had to send Lt. Nun with three companies of sepoy to reduce them.<sup>4</sup> Then the chuars of Pachet and Patkum in the north and of Singhbhum in the south-west also joined the insurgents. A body of about 5,000 chuars invaded Ghatshila and the zamindar (a protégé of the British) and the

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1. Morgan to Vansittart, 6 Aug. 1768, Ibid. No.379.

2. Morgan to Vansittart, 11 Aug. 1768, Ibid. No.383.

3. Vansittart to J. Alexander, Coll.General, 10 April 1769, Ibid. No.447.

4. Vansittart to C. Russell, Coll.General, 14 Dec. 1769, Ibid. No.499.



Company's sepoy's stationed there were obliged to retire to the Narsinggarh fort. Lt. Nun and Capt. Forbes with five companies of sepoy's and two small field pieces at last drove them into the hills with considerable loss.<sup>1</sup>

The resident was so much irritated by these episodes that he ordered the two military officers not to stop before the business was completed. Subla Singh, the jagirdar of Koilapal, one of the most obstinate chuar chiefs, was to be seized and hanged upon the spot as an example.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1770 it seemed that the area was pacified. Lt. Nun left Barabhum for Ambikanagar, detaining some sepoy's in Barabhum to act under the orders of the Balrampur thanadar. Capt. Forbes, too, was ordered to leave Haldipokhar, and the collector general was informed that the disturbances in the jungle would very soon be entirely stopped.<sup>3</sup>

But only a few days after this, Nun's sepoy's were surprised among the hills and jungles by the chuars. A subadar, a sergeant and about twenty sepoy's were killed and Lt. Nun, another subadar and forty sepoy's, though wounded, only saved themselves by flight. A few days later, a party of sepoy's stationed by Captain Forbes at Kochang, two kos from Haldipokhar, was cut off, and Capt. Forbes himself was greatly harassed in the hills.<sup>4</sup>

Since the troops in the field were almost as hard hit

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1. Vansittart to C. Russell, 24 Dec. 1769, Ibid. No. 503.
  2. Vansittart to Lt. Nun, 8 Jan. 1770, Ibid. No. 509.
  3. Vansittart to Capt. Forbes, 8 Jan. 1770, Ibid. No. 510.  
Vansittart to C. Russell, 14 Jan. 1770, Ibid. No. 511.
  4. Vansittart to C. Russell, 19 Jan. 1770. Ibid. No. 512.

by sickness as by the activities of the chuars, two further companies were marched to Haldipokhar under a Lt. Goodyar to restore order there.<sup>1</sup> In all six and a half companies were now engaged, and the chuars seemed inclined to submit, returning the gun and certain matchlocks seized from Nun's party.

The resident, however, wanted to reduce the rebels to complete obedience before making peace. He therefore ordered a permanent posting of sepoy in Barabhum, and the taking of a muchalaka or guarantee from the zamindar that he would accept responsibility for any future disturbances.<sup>2</sup> He also toyed with the idea of annexing Kochang.<sup>3</sup> But Peiarce, the Assistant to the next Resident, gave this up because it would encroach upon the overlord rights of the independent Raja of Mayurbhanj. He persuaded the Mayurbhanj Raja, however, himself to depose the Kochang chief, appointing the zamindar of Bamanghati in his place.<sup>4</sup> The zamindar was to be answerable for any incursions into Ghatshila from his side, while the raja was to settle and collect the revenues.

Certain of the sardars and jagirdars remained, however, undaunted, and the Midnapur authorities had for years to contend with such chuars as Subla Singh of Koilapal, with Samangunjan, the Sardar of Dhadka in Barabhum pargana, and

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1. Vansittart to C. Russell, 15 Feb. 1770, Ibid. No.523.

2. Vansittart to Lt. Nun, 31 March 1770, Ibid. No.533.

3. Vansittart to G.D. Goodyar, 7 Feb. 1770, Ibid. No.520.

4. J. Peiarce [probably] to Goodyar, 8 April 1770, Ibid. No.536.

with Jagannath Pater, the Dampara Sardar in Ghatshila, backed as they were by the violent spirit of the tribal people.<sup>1</sup> In the end it became evident that punitive expeditions alone could not solve the problem, and the Company turned to the creation of a system of forts and permanent police posts for a solution.

So, while small parties, strengthened perhaps by a couple of two-pounders pursued the chuar leaders, small forts were constructed, from early in 1771, to hold the cleared areas.<sup>(A)</sup> This had its effect upon the rebels, and in January 1771 Subla Singh of Koilapal sounded Lt. Goodyar, asking if his life would be spared, should he surrender.<sup>2</sup> Nothing came of his query, or of Goodyar's suggestion that he should be spared, because it soon became clear that the chuars were busy preparing an ambush for him. Nevertheless the fact that the building of a fort had led to parleys about peace encour-

1. Edward Baber to Goodyar, 30 Nov. 1770, Midnapur Dist. Records, IV, No.70. Jagannath Pater the Dampara chief was probably the father of Baijnath Singh and grandfather of Raghunath Singh who rebelled in 1798-1810 and 1832-33 respectively.

2. Goodyar to E.Baber, 3 Jan. 1771, Midnapur Dist. Records, III, No.1.

(A) From Doom Jure, 29 Jan. 1771 [No name, probably from Goodyar], Ibid. No.9:

"I have made the walls of the trunk of trees from ten to twenty two inches in circumference and twelve feet long two feet of which is sunk into the Earth in the following manner o o o o o with a distance between each pile for

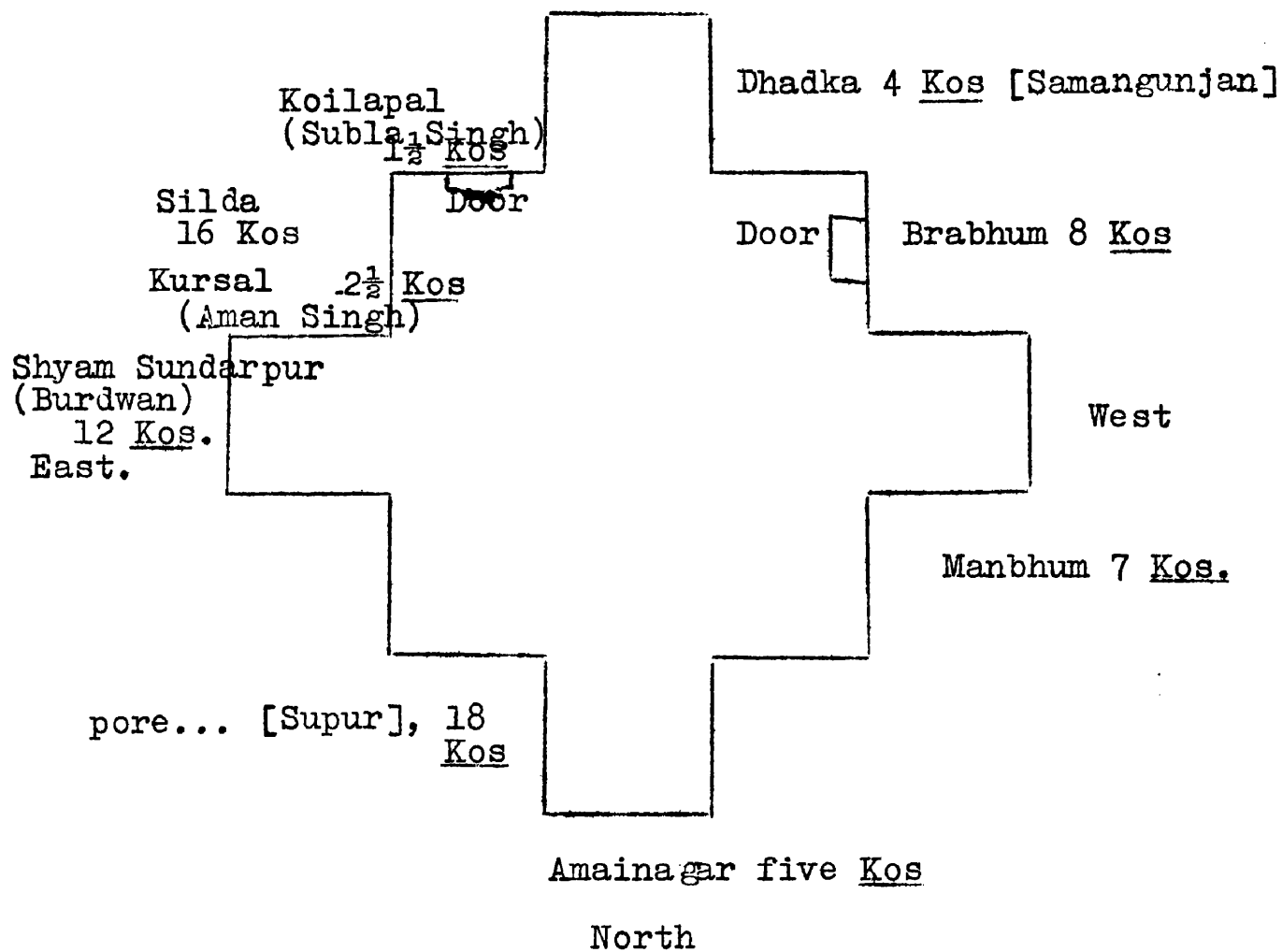
o o o

pointing a musket". He also wanted to have a parapet of earth about five feet or more for the defendants to stand on and to have small barracks for the sepoys in the rains and to hold grain.

p. 28 contd

Situation of the strongholds of the chuars:-

Dampara 7 Kos. South  
[Jagannath Pater] Ghatchila 16 Kos.



aged Baber, the Midnapur resident to propose further construction. To Goodyar he expressed his conviction that in such strong points lay the answer: "they will never be quiet unless troops constantly remain in those parts and I am strongly inclined towards building these small Tannacs [thanas] sufficient to contain sixty seapoys [sepoys] each who should reside there and who then be [...] quell any disturbance in its infancy. But these Tannas should be erected in such places as would keep these fellows most in awe and that the seapoys might soon march to each others assistance..."<sup>1</sup> The thanadar of Narsinggarh also expressed his opinion to Goodyar that if new thanas were established they would strike terror into the hearts of the chuars, who were a scourge to Ghatshila, Barabhum, and Manbhum.<sup>2</sup>

Even after the stockaded forts had been built, the problem remained of catching the rebel leaders. Baber put the difficulties very clearly in a letter to Goodyar: "You have an ambush to expect every mile you march - If it is possible to lay hold of the ringleaders of these disturbances I would have you do it by all means for without a severe example I am afraid they will never be quiet - I should be very loth to trust any of these men with each

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1. Baber to Goodyar, 9 Jan. 1771, Midnapur Dist. Records, IV, No.79.

2. Goodyar to Baber, 23 Jan. 1771, Midnapur Dist. Records III, No.8.

others country, as it appears to me there is not a pin to share amongst them - However policy often dictates that one scoundrel [sic] is to be preferred to another."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, operating from his new bases Goodyar did succeed in surprising a large number of chuars - and described most graphically how "they began to dance and jump like furies, to escape the shot and arrows of each other at the same time shouting and making a noise."<sup>2</sup> Goodyar thus succeeded in pacifying the thanas for some time, and a party of sepoy's were posted at Dumjiri to maintain the tranquillity.

The tranquillity was of course a comparative state, and one which fairly regularly varied with the agricultural season. From seed sowing to harvest the tranquillity was almost absolute, but from harvest until seed-time there was a period when adventure was tempting. This the Midnapur resident explained when reporting a fresh wave of disturbances in Ghatshila, caused by renewed attacks of Jagannath Dhal upon his usurper brother (who had been installed by Vansittart) in February 1773.<sup>3</sup> He said to the Governor Warren Hastings, "You will perhaps ask, Sir, how these people came not to be under better subjection after having been reduced so long - it is principally owing to the nature of the country which from its woods Wous[sic] and mountains

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1. Baber to Goodyar, 11 Feb. 1771, Midnapur Dist. Records, IV, No.85.
  2. Goodyar to Baber, 24 Feb. 1771, Midnapur Dist. Records, III, No.11.
  3. Baber to Warren Hastings, 6 Feb. 1773, Midnapur Dist. Records, IV, No.163.

is almost inaccessible [sic]. As soon as the harvest is gathered in they carry their grain to the tops of the hills or lodge it in other fortresses that are impregnable so that whenever they are pursued by a superior force they retire to these places where they are quite secure and bid defiance to any attack that can be made against them."<sup>1</sup>

He described the western Jungles as: "an extent of country of about 80 miles in length and 60 in breadth. On the east it is bounded by Midnapore on the west by Singboom - on the north by Pacheet and on the south by Mohurbunge - there is very little land cultivated in this whole extent and very disproportionate part of it capable of cultivation [the soil] is very rocky - the country is mountainous and overspread[...] with thick woods which render it in many places utterly impassable it has always been annexed in the province of Midnapore but from its situation it was never greatly regarded in the Nabobs Government [sic] and the Zemindars sometimes paid their rents or rather tributes and sometimes not - ....This territory is divided into two Tannahs one called Tann[.] Bulrampore and the other Tanna Janpore the form[.] is subdivided into nine Purgannas and the latter into eight and each of these is governed by a Zemindar who is dignified amongst his Ryots with the title

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1. Ibid. No.163.

of Rajah - These zemindars are mere freebooters who plunder their neighbours and one another and their tenants are a banditti whom they chiefly emplo[...] in these outrages - These depredations keep the zemindars and their tenants continually in arms for after the harvest is gathered in there is scarcely one of them who does not call his Ryotts to his standard either to defend his own property or attack his neighbours - the effects of this ... feudal anarchy are that the Revenue is very precarious - The zemindars are refractory and the inhabitants rude and ungovernable."<sup>1</sup>

The 1773 Ghatshila disturbances were eventually quelled, the ryots reinstated in the possession of their fields,<sup>2</sup> and new troop dispositions arranged for the rains, with companies at Narsinggarh, Haldipokhar and Manbhum.<sup>3</sup> But early in 1774 the season for disturbances brought further campaigns, for Jagannath Dhal laid waste the major portion of Dhalbhum.<sup>4</sup> The chuars constantly fought against the troops. Lt. Smith wrote from Haldipokhar on 6 May, "I am likewise informed that the hill [...]llows in the whole environs have agreed to, join [....Jaganath Pater<sup>5</sup> or

1. Ibid. No.163.

2. Samuel Lewis, Resident, to Warren Hastings, 7 June 1773, Ibid. No.204.

3. Lewis to Lt.Hawkins, 13 Aug. 1773, Ibid. No.217. Also J.Dunn to Lewis, Manbhum, 27 Sept. 1773, Midnapur Dist. Records, III, No.219.

4. Smith, commanding at Haldipokhar, to Lewis, 10 April 1774, Ibid. No.325.

5. Jagannath Pater was the Sardar Ghatwal of Dampara - a supporter and dependant of Jagannath Dhal.



act] in concert with him, to drive our sepoys out of every part of the country ... my <sup>man</sup>ambition is so much exposed that two or three enterprizing fellows, in a dark night, might destroy it, maugre the utmost diligence of centries [sic]; (in which case this detachment must be cut off; for these people being as brave as our sepoys their numbers must prevail, when they cannot be kept at a distance; their arrows being as superior to bayonets, as muskets are to arrows). I have set about building a secure place for it; when I shall have nothing to ...[fear] (unless being starved) from all the numbers ...[that] may be brought against me."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Jagannath Dhal hung over this part of the jungly areas like a dark cloud, so that survey parties could not complete their work<sup>2</sup> and the Midnapur authorities could not realize their revenues from Ghatshila. Lt.Smith rightly wrote: "Unless Jagarnot Doll is subdued, [...] the Honble Company can never receive an anna from this side [of] the Soubonrika [Subarnarekha] river, ... till he is [raja again], he will never cease destroying this country with fire and sword."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Smith to Lewis, 6 May 1774, Midnapur Dist. Records, III, No.339.
  2. From 1772 to 1774 the survey operations in these parganas were constantly opposed, even though troops - two whole companies in 1774 - accompanied the survey party. Even with such an escort the surveyor was not safe, as the jungle fellows attacked them at every step between Barabhum and Manbhum and they could not procure provisions. [Young] to S.Lewis, 2[22?] April 1774, Ibid. No.335.
  3. Smith to Lewis, 6 May 1774, Ibid.No.339.

This was a very sensible piece of advice. The attachment of the tribal people to their chief, had been proved beyond doubt. They would not tolerate the imposition of a chief by the British authorities. The Midnapur authorities, therefore, yielded. Jagannath was re-installed on the throne in 1777, and he agreed to pay Rs.2,000 for the first year, Rs.3,000 the second year and Rs.4,000 the third.<sup>1</sup> (This settlement was continued under the Decennial Settlement.)<sup>2</sup>

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to give further instances of the political and military difficulties which faced the East India Company when it attempted to enforce the authority it had received by the grant of the Diwani in 1765, or of the tedious, frequently repeated little campaigns by which the Company's strength was gradually impressed upon the inhabitants of the Jungle Mahals. The difficulties of the country were obviously very great, but these practical difficulties were aggravated by the many changes in the framework of the administration to which the mahals were subjected, and by the unsuitability of the police and revenue systems applied to the area. In the remainder of this chapter each of these difficulties will be reviewed in some detail.

The topography of the whole area studied in this thesis has already been briefly surveyed and the mountainous, forested nature of the whole can be found repeated in

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1. D.G. Singhbhum, 180.

2. Beng. Rev. Cons. 19 of 27 March 1794 (53).  
14).

Manbhum Division, though on a lesser scale. Manbhum forms in fact the last step in the descent from the elevated plateau of Chota Nagpur, to the south. The highest peaks in the district are found in the Dalma range, in the extreme south, where a height of 3407 feet is reached.<sup>1</sup> Dropping away to the north there are met in succession the Bagmundi or Ajodhya range, 2000 feet high, which forms the watershed between the Subarnarekha and Kasai rivers, then an outline of the Hazaribagh plateau, forming the watershed between the Kasai and the Damodar, and finally a double spur of hills running in from near Pārasnath.

Though today, "thanks to the wasteful and improvident methods followed by the landlords and the raiyats, jungle has practically disappeared, except in the extreme south,"<sup>2</sup> in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Manbhum was still thickly forested with sal (teak). Thus, in 1773 it was described as "mountainous and overspread with thick woods, which render it in many places utterly impassable".<sup>3</sup> Even in 1800, after thirty-five years of British rule, it was reported that two-thirds of Midnapur consisted of jungle, the greater part of which was uninhabited and inaccessible.<sup>4</sup>

It has already been seen what obstacles such a terrain presented to the British administrators and their forces.

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1. Gokhale, Manbhum Settlement Report, Para.5.

2. Ibid. Para.8.

3. Cit. Bayley, Memoranda of Midnapore, 2. See p.31 of this chapter.

4. D.G.Midnapore, 35.

But the natural difficulties were not the only odds. O'Malley has written: "What with the inroads, or the threatened inroads, of the Marāthās and of the levies of the Mayūrbhanj Rājā, the forcible exactions of armed Sannyāsis and Fakīrs, the raids of the aboriginal tribes (generally known as chuārs ), and the turbulence of the jungle chiefs and their adherents, the country, more especially to the west and south, was continually disturbed."<sup>1</sup> We must also note the constant changes in jurisdiction under the company as another disturbing factor. The Jungle Mahals came under the Company in 1767, as dependencies of the zamindari of Midnapur, then in the hands of a rani.<sup>2</sup> From 1764 to 1774, therefore, it was the Midnapur resident who exercised control over the military forces stationed there, and the police thanas of Janpur and Balrampur. In 1774, however, superintendence was transferred to the Provincial Council of Burdwan.<sup>3</sup> When in 1778 Midnapur was separated from Burdwan and made a separate collectorate, control reverted to Midnapur.<sup>4</sup> Minor shifts also took place within the area - thus Phulkusmā and Raipur, though settled by Fergusson under the orders of the Midnapur resident, were included in Burdwan by 1772 - and to this district Shamsundarpur was also added.<sup>5</sup> In 1783, Bogree, until then a part of Burdwan, became a separate collectorate,

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1. Ibid. 35.

2. Price, op.cit. 29.

3. Ibid. 9.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid. 30. In Jan. 1794 Raipur and Shamsundarpur were re-transferred to Midnapur, See Board of Revenue to Midnapur collector, 7 Jan. 1794, Hunter, Beng. Ms. Records, II, No. 3330.

but in 1795 it was transferred to Midnapur, though one thana, Chandarkona, in 1798 formed part of the Hugli district.<sup>1</sup> In May 1800, however, Bogree reverted to the jurisdiction of the Burdwan collector - though for judicial matters remaining under the Magistrate of Midnapur! Again, early in 1800 Chhatna was transferred to Birbhum - for the better preservation of the peace of the country - only to revert again in July to Midnapur.<sup>2</sup>

Besides these changes in administrative areas, there were also changes being introduced in the powers of the various officials appointed to them. Thus in the early years though a diwani adalat was established at Midnapur, and the magistrate who superintended it could arrest delinquents, the powers of trial and punishment were still reserved to the Nawab's nizamat adalat.<sup>3</sup> From 1785 the magistrate was granted powers in petty criminal cases, but all serious cases still had to be referred to the nizamat adalat. It was not until 1787 that the collectors came to enjoy the triple powers of a revenue agent, judge and police magistrate.<sup>4</sup> In 1791 the faujdari adalat (nizamat adalat) was abolished, and replaced by a court of circuit for the Calcutta division, sitting periodically at Midnapur.<sup>5</sup> Finally in 1793 Cornwallis introduced his general re-arrangement, by which the judicial and revenue branches were entirely separated. The

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1. Price, op.cit. 31.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. 10.

4. Firminger, Fifth Report, 22.

5. DG.Midnapur, 34.

offices of the judge and magistrate in Midnapur were thereafter united in one person, and a separate collector was put in charge of revenue matters.

Such constant shifts and changes made it very difficult for the people to understand the workings of the British system, and caused much inconvenience to those paying revenue, especially after the withdrawal of the collector from Midnapur in 1774. They also had the equally unhappy effect of preventing the Company's officials really getting to know the people and the district. Harassed new officials, busy with investments for the Company, if not with private trade, saw in tribal unrest merely the acts of contumacious savages not symptoms of a disease requiring diagnosis. One might take as an example the reports upon the mahal of Nyabasan. The Midnapur collector in 1780 referred to it as an estate whose lands were mostly held by a kind of feudal tenure by sardars and paiks, and such indisciplined rabble, ready to turn out at the caprice of the zamindar.<sup>1</sup> Next year it was said that these estates were "a jungle; that their rents are a kind of quit-rent collected from their pikes [paiks] and chuars; [that] they are surrounded likewise by jungle zemindars, On the east by Bogree and Bishnupur; on the north by Pachet [Panchkot or Panchet]; on the west by Singbhoom; on the south Damudar Bhanza the Moharbunj Rajah; that all these are more mighty

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1. Midnapur collector to Warren Hastings, 2 Oct. 1780, quoted in Price, op.cit. 67.

than they".<sup>1</sup> The Midnapur collector wrote a week after this that the inhabitants of these areas were chuars, "bred up as much for pillaging as cultivating, and pay a kind of quit-rent from the profits of both occupations."<sup>2</sup>

This officer was not the only one who showed this lack of sympathy towards tribal people who had reacted adversely to the new system of control. In fact, no officer tried to go to the root of the problem. They took it for granted that these were criminals who could be subdued only through ruthless measures. Naturally enough, whenever they rose, they were attacked by the military force. This state of affairs continued till the eyes of the authorities were somewhat opened towards the end of the 18th century.

One of the causes for resistance is to be found in the revenue system imposed by the Company. The area had never been effectively subdued by the northern empires, and thus had had no experience of the survey and detailed assessment of the Mughals. Any attempt to introduce a formal revenue system was likely to be ill received, and one which ignored tribal custom and feeling and which was operated by outsiders was certain to cause trouble. The difficulty of realizing revenues from the jungle estates was felt very early, and the first solution was to appoint thanadars who were to keep an

1. Midnapur collector to Warren Hastings, 23 Nov. 1781, Firminger, Fifth Report, P.CXXIX

Also see Price, op.cit. 67.

2. To Warren Hastings, 27 Nov. 1781, quoted in Price, Ibid. 67.

eye on the zamindars, since these last were thought to be "very far from being so much civilized as to render it proper to free them from some such restraint."<sup>1</sup> Such a system was the more necessary as the zamindars of the jungle estates had no hierarchy of their own through which the Company could operate: they were described as independent chiefs, whose mahals were all held direct, or hazuri (paying revenue direct to the Government).<sup>2</sup> The two thanadars in western Midnapur - one at Balrampur, the other at Ghatshila - were thus responsible for collections from a number of zamindars. The total collections under the former were Rs.9948-1-3, and under the latter Rs.4000. In each case a proportion of the expenses of the thanadar was defrayed by the zamindars (Rs.50 of the Rs.97 at Balrampur, Rs.22-8 of the Rs.54-8 at Ghatshila).<sup>3</sup>

The thanadar system was, however, only a temporary expedient, which might gradually reveal the capacity of a country for which no detailed records existed. (Bayley, the

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1. Midnapur collector to Board of Revenue, 9 Jan. 1789, Beng. Rev. Cons. 18 March 1789, P.113. ( $\frac{51}{33}$ )
  2. Midnapur magistrate to Board, 4 Feb. 1789, Ibid. P.114. [The control of the Midnapur Rani over them was only nominal. In Chota Nagpur and Palamau, on the other hand, the maharaja and the raja respectively, because of their closer control over their dependants, were made responsible for the revenue collection of the whole of their areas.] One Manikchand was put in charge of collections in 1188 fasli. [1781 A.D.]. He eventually found his sadr allowance insufficient. He represented this to these jungle zamindars, who agreed to defray his charges. Thus arose the Mufussil establishment. Ibid.
  3. Ibid. 115-118: A third thanadar was at Janpur. According to Bayley, Memoranda of Midnapore, 2, Higginson's settlement of 1776 with the jungle zamindars was at Rs.17846.



Midnapur collector noted in 1852 that "the cultivators in this jungle formerly held their field (jots) in some parts without leases, rent papers, etc. They brought the whole produce to the zamindar, who gave them means of support during the year."<sup>1</sup>) If from 1772 survey parties were at work in the area it has already been seen under what difficulties they operated. By the time when a Permanent Settlement in Bengal was being discussed, there was still only scanty information about the Jungle Mahals, which were still disturbed. In neighbouring Ramgarh the collector successfully urged upon Sir John Shore the inadvisability of introducing any permanent settlement into the undeveloped areas of his district.

In the Jungle Mahals of Midnapur, an area no less undeveloped than Ramgarh, no one urged the unsuitability of the Permanent settlement and so the regulations of 1793 were applied to them. Thus, the laws meant for the more civilized parts of the Bengal Presidency, were blindly applied to these areas. As the Fifth Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons noted in 1812, "Without sufficient attention to their [tribal people's] peculiar character, this people had been included in the general system of internal administration. The immediate authority over them was given to police dāroḡās,<sup>2</sup> and by the operation of selling estates for revenue

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1. Bayley, Ibid. 16.

2. These darogas are not less corrupt than the tannahdars. their predecessors". Firminger, Fifth Report, I, 130.

balances, many of their zamindars had been dispossessed. The effects of this violence on the habits of the people were felt by degrees. They sided with the discarded zamīndārs, condemned the authority of the police officers, and were frequently guilty of great disorders."<sup>1</sup>

As Hunter put it, the Permanent settlement "tried to suddenly substitute contract for custom."<sup>2</sup> One can well imagine what a tremendous shock the new system of values must have been for tribal cultivators and chiefs who had always been guided by their own customs. The floodgates of land litigation were now opened - forged papers, hard swearing, and the power of a party to exhaust the resources of the other by chicanery, delays and appeals, these now became the deciding factors.<sup>3</sup> Zamindars and peasants who suddenly found themselves possessed, as landowners, of private property which was a first-class security, borrowed improvidently. Their creditors, who knew how to handle the new machinery of the courts, used the unprecedented facilities for exacting the full value of their bonds. The courts, ignorant of the tribal land structure, indifferent to the ruinous rates of interest being charged, enforced decisions according to the letter of the regulation. Moreover, the landlords were now given unlimited powers for increasing the rents of the

1. Quoted in D G. Midnapore, 196.

2. Hunter, Beng. Ms. Records, I, 89.

3. Ibid. 88.

cultivators, and rack-renting ruined many families. Eventually the public and impartial village record of rights, by which the cultivators had been holding land, was changed into a private and hostile record under the control of the landlords.

This new system was too much to follow for the semi-tribal chiefs and their ignorant and simple ryots. The Rani Siromani of the Midnapur estate, the Raja of Pachet, the Zamindar of Raipur and several others all on a sudden found themselves driven from pillar to post (either by the Company's collectors and their subordinates or by the moneylenders) and they had to face unusual humiliations, e.g. arrest, mortgage, sale and attachment of property.

But they were not so timid as the Hindu and Muslim zamindars of the other parts of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Their tribal followers would not tolerate the exit of their old chiefs, and the entry of new non-tribal zamindars. Hence, they resisted the British authority from 1795 to 1800 in all those estates which were auctioned off for revenue arrears. In the case of Pachet and Raipur the Government had to yield (as will be seen later). In Bishnupur, the Bhumijes of Barabhum, Manbhum

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1. According to Price, *op.cit.* 73: The jungle zamindar was a sort of military chief, "to whom his ryots might look for protection, who might command his paiks with effect, and whose title should not be doubtful".

and other Jungle Mahals came in thousands to assist the family of the late Raja Chetan Singh to get back its zamindari, and they showed unprecedented enmity to the new purchasers of land there.<sup>1</sup> They stopped all collections, and the ryots had to flee to the neighbouring parganas.<sup>2</sup> Both the Bishnupur and Midnapur estates remained a scene of murder, plunder and rapine throughout 1799.<sup>3</sup> Several battalions of regular troops were employed, but to no effect.<sup>4</sup>

The unrest became so general because the ghatwals, who traditionally provided the police authority in the tribal areas, had themselves been aggrieved by the actions of the Government. These paiks had already encouraged the ryots to refuse all revenue payments in the Birbhum district in 1781 - and, as Government recognized, they had done so as a protest against the extortionate demands of the zamindar and his agents.<sup>5</sup> In that case the ghatwals, who were also the sardars or leaders of their tribal community, had acted against their own chiefs. When the Permanent settlement was introduced, the ghatwals themselves suffered, for the lands

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1. C.R.Blunt, Actg. Burdwan Magt., to Govt., 18 Feb. 1799, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 1 of 22 Feb. 1799 (128  
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  2. Ibid.
  3. Lt. R. Spottiswood to Lt. Coll. W.Scott, Adj. General, 23 Feb. 1799, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 20 of 8 March 1799 (128  
40). Also C.R.Blunt to Govt., 11 Feb. 1799, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 11 of 15 Feb. 1799 (128  
40)
  4. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 6 of 11 July 1799 (128  
42)
  5. Home Misc. No.207(2) PP. 379-381. In 1852 the Midnapur collector wrote that these people "were contented, industrious, brave, truthful, and confiding, much attached too to their proprietors, a whole village would literally in one night 'upstick' and off to some zamindar, whose general character promised them better treatment," Bayley, Memoranda of Midnapore, 16.

which for centuries they had enjoyed as a reward for their services were resumed by Government.<sup>1</sup> Their ghatwali (paikan) lands were resumed under the 1793 Regulations (clause 4, Sec.8, Reg.I) when the Government took upon itself the charge of the police. The ghatwals had formerly paid a quit-rent, but now the total revenue of these lands rose from Rs.27,553 to Rs.50,138.<sup>2</sup> Their discontent can be gauged from the following petition which the ghatwals of Bishnupur sent to the Judge of Burdwan in May 1798: "We with our brethren have for many generations held the office of Ghautwals & chowkedars. We have an allowance of lands & the Sardars hold from 20 to 40 Begas at the most & our brethren under us hold each from 5 to 14 Begas. We have no other allowance and each servant paid eighteen annas Salamy to the zemindar.... Since the appointment of the police Darogahs we give notice of everything that passes to them & always watch the Ghauts & attend him [sic] for this allowance. It is we conceive severe & heavy duty, besides the above sums the zemindar and collector's Aumlah demand an increase which is very hard."<sup>3</sup>

When they saw their chiefs' lands sold for revenue arrears to foreigners, they joined forces with them against

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1. By Reg. 22 of 1793 the daroga system of police had been introduced. A daroga was the officer in charge of a thana and he had under him a few barkandazes.
  2. Board to Govt., 8 March 1799, Beng. Rev. Cons. 32 of 15 March 1799. (54<sub>1</sub>)
  3. Petition, Enclosure to collector to Board, 4 May 1798, Guha and Mitra, West Beng. Dist. Records. Burdwan, 329.

the Company's Government. So great was their wrath that they killed the sheristadar of Janpur thana (Rasik Lal Ghose) and the life of the Balrampur tahsildar was also threatened.<sup>1</sup>

The disturbances continued right through the year 1800.

Krishna Chandra Chatterjee, the new zamindar of Kismat Midnapur, made repeated representation about the depredations by the chuars. The tahsildar of the resumed paikan lands posted at Anandpur, reported that it was impossible to realize the revenues, and that there was a grave risk to his life.<sup>2</sup>

The authorities then took drastic actions. They brought the rani of Midnapur estate a prisoner to Midnapur on 6 April 1799, and five companies of sepoy began to hunt down the tribal people. According to J.C.Price, "~~In~~ 1799 A.D. is marked in the Midnapore annals as the year of the great chuar rebellion, ghastly with its tale of horrors and massacre; when all the evil passions of the infuriated Sardars and Paiks burst forth in a wild attempt to revenge the resumption of their Jagir lands on the Government, if not to compel it to order a complete restoration of them. All the lawless tribes of the jungle Mahals made common cause with the Paiks and carried slaughter and flame to the very doors of the Magistrate's Cutcherry."<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the daroga system of police introduced in 1793 had proved an utter failure in this area. The darogas from the more 'civilized' areas of Bihar and Bengal were prone to

1. I.Imhoff, Midnapur collector, to Board, 30 March 1799, Beng. Rev.Cons. 12 of 12 April 1799. (<sup>24</sup>/<sub>2</sub>)

2. Board to Govt., 16 Feb. 1800. Beng.Rev. Cons. 4 of 27 Feb. 1800. (<sup>24</sup>/<sub>10</sub>)

3. The Chuar Rebellion of 1799, quoted in DG.Midnapore, 43.

take bribes and to exploit the simple tribal people at their will. Thus, in 1794 Govind Ram, the police daroga of Chhatna and Panchanand, that of Manbhum, were charged with "having received bribes for releasing persons accused before them of being concerned in robberies."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they were physically and mentally unfit to cope with the criminals of this area. The plainsmen suffered greatly from sickness in the hills and jungles. The barkandazos, under the darogas, invariably failed in apprehending refractory persons, "who assembled in such force as to preclude the possibility of the Darogas acting against them unaided by regular troops."<sup>2</sup> But the troops, like the official police, were quite ignorant of the jungles and fastnesses. The problems of the darogas became quite insuperable when the ghatwals, who had been in exclusive charge of the rural police, showed themselves hostile. In Burdwan it was reported in February 1794 that "in consequence of the Police arrangements now put under the direction of the police Darogahs these landholders [Mukarraridars or ghatwals] deny any obligation of service due to the zemindars and refuse to pay rent."<sup>3</sup>

By March 1799, Imhoff, the Midnapur collector, was

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1. Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 4 of 29 Aug.1794. (<sup>128</sup>/<sub>13</sub>) A similar charge was proved against Md. Murad, the police daroga of Chitrapal and several others. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 7 Nov. 1794. (<sup>128</sup>/<sub>5</sub>)
  2. Price, op.cit. 69. They could not even prevent cattle-lifting, a common form of banditry in this area; I.Imhoff Midnapur collector, to Board, 4 March 1799, Para.6. Beng. Rev. Cons.33 of 15 March 1799. (<sup>54</sup>/<sub>1</sub>)
  3. West Bengal District Records - Burdwan, 102.

emphasising the need to restore paikan lands. These lands had been granted in the past on the ground that "the zemindar was held responsible for all robberies and thefts and was likewise obliged to protect the country, and the ryotts, in as far as his power lay, from any incursions of an enemy, in addition to this the Pikes [sic] always escorted the Revenue of the pergunnah to the treasury, and in case of any troops sent out to quell disturbances they acted as spies and in short gave their assistance in many respects and from the want of it no troops are at present able to act with any effect, more particularly as they are not acquainted with the roads, or haunts of the chowars[chuans]".<sup>1</sup>

Imhoff strongly argued that these paikan lands should be restored, otherwise, he thought, the country would become a desert and a harbour for robbers and wild beasts.<sup>2</sup> He also stressed what a saving a settlement would mean for the military authorities because most of the sepoys sent to Raipur had fallen "victims to the fever which generally seizes such persons as are not constant inhabitants of the jungles."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, he went to the length of suggesting that the paiks could well be formed "into a corps of Rangers, in the same manner as at Boglepore [Bhagalpur]" and at a negligent cost.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Imhoff to Board, 4 March 1799, Para.2, Beng.Rev. Cons. 33 of 15 March 1799 (54  
1).

2. Ibid. Para.3: Since the lands were no longer cultivated, the fear of wild beasts had increased.

3. Ibid. Para.4.

4. Ibid. Para. 5. A similar proposal for raising a tribal militia had been made by Lt. Hume, Officer commanding at Midnapur. See Price, op.cit. 69.



These tribal people, he thought, were "in general a very brave and inoffensive people" unless they were driven to extremities.<sup>1</sup>

From such particular considerations, Imhoff drew the general conclusion that the general regulations, meant for more civilized people, should not apply to the tribal people of the area: "it would be well worth the attention of Government to frame separate regulations for the jungle zemindars and their ryotts who are almost savages, their lands also should never be sold to realize the revenue as it only creates disturbances and greater loss to Government for sooner or later they pay their revenue."<sup>2</sup> Raipur, he suggested, was a striking proof of this. It was preferable, therefore, to compromise the business with the former zamindar, rather than to introduce a non-tribal purchaser who would "never be able to keep possession" without the constant help of the military.<sup>3</sup>

The Board of Revenue came to realize the blunder committed by them in 1793 in ordering the resumption of paikan lands. In March 1799 they recorded the opinion "that the reinstating of the Pykes [sic] in the possession of the lands formerly held by them at the original quit-rent paid by them, is not only best calculated to restore tranquillity to the district, but also that they are in fact the only

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1. Imhoff to Board, 4 March 1799, Para 5, Beng.Rev.Cons.33 of 15 March 1799 (54)  
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2. Ibid. para.6.

3. Ibid.

description of persons who can preserve the public peace in future, in as much as the nature of the country not only requires the active exertions of officers minutely acquainted with its avenues, but also a much larger body of officers than are at present allowed on the local police Establishments."<sup>1</sup> They also decided that the jungle zamindars ought again to be put in charge of these paiks, since the non-tribal darogas could not control them. "Considering the influence which the hill zemindars retain over the peasantry of every description", they suggested that these Jungle Mahals might be exempted from the operation of the police regulations, and the zamindars might be made responsible for the preservation of the public peace in their respective estates."<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the collectors' suggestion about preventing the sale of lands, the Board refrained from putting forward any decided opinion. But they suggested that "as the people are extremely wild and ignorant and to the last degree pertinacious of their customs, sound policy would seem to suggest that an indulgence in those customs is best calculated to preserve the peace of the country and attach them to the English Government."<sup>3</sup>

Here was the nucleus of the zamindari or ghatwali police system and of the ultimate de-regularisation of the

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1. Board to Govt, 23 March 1799, Para.8, Beng. Rev.Cons. 28 of 29 March 1799. ( $\frac{54}{1}$ )

2. Ibid.

3. Board to Govt., 8 March 1799, Beng. Rev. Cons. 32 of 15 March 1799. ( $\frac{54}{1}$ )

area in 1833-34. But for the time being the implementation of a new scheme was deferred till the rebellion had entirely ceased, for otherwise, it was argued, it would create a sense of victory in the chuars.<sup>1</sup> Imhoff suggested that the only means of restoring peace was "that all the Darogahs and peace officers on the part of Government should be immediately recalled from the jungles, as they are the grand promoters of all the disturbances and the disaffection which at present exists among the greater part of the zamindars."<sup>2</sup> The restored ghatwali police should then be placed directly under these zamindars / who should be made responsible for all outrages. Under such conditions these chiefs would give a hearty cooperation to the magistrate, especially if he, in turn, should give presents of horses etc. to them.<sup>3</sup> Such rewards, given to the zamindars by the magistrate personally - who should regularly tour the district to ensure close contact, - would do much to break down suspicion.

To prevent the recurrence of further disturbances by the zamindars, Imhoff again urged that "their lands should never be liable to be sold to realise the balances but if any zamindar should refuse payment after it had been demanded by the collector two or three times, and he (the collector) think that he was refractory and would not pay it at all, a

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1. Imhoff to Board, 16 Apl. 1799, Paras.2-3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 3 May 1799. ( 54 )  
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2. Ibid. Para. 5.

3. Ibid.

party of sepoy should then be secretly detached to enforce payment by surrounding his house, but no sepoy should on any account whatever be deputed without an European officer - that should be rigidly attended to as the sepoy are too apt to commit depredations when they are by themselves. This would consequently drive the zemindars to despair..."<sup>1</sup>

Imhoff further suggested that some superior zamindars should be made darogas. "If these jungle Zemindars were not irritated and harassed by the Darogahs, sepoy, Tehsildars and peons," he wrote, "I think they would be quiet, but so long as the present system of the police Darogahs, who are of no kind of use but to extort and oppress, remains in force I see no hopes of tranquillity being restored to the country. On the other hand if it is done away the jungle would... become<sup>2</sup> highly cultivated as the inhabitants are a laborious people."

To support these views Imhoff gave a number of striking illustrations. He revealed, as examples of the failure of the daroga police, that the 24 Sebundy sepoy stationed at the daroga's cutchery in Barabhum, as well as the darogas of Raipur, Satpatti, and Bahadurpur had all fled from their stations in terror, and that for some months not a single case had been sent to the Midnapur Magistrate by any Jungle Mahal daroga.<sup>3</sup> He pointed out, similarly, that in

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Here is the best possible testimony that the tribal people and their chiefs, far from being habitual criminals, were a peaceful folk driven to violence as the only method of airing their grievances.

3. Ibid. Para. 6.

Midnapur and Nyabasan, where two widowed ranis were seeking to recover their estates, and in Barajit and Raipur, the non-tribal purchasers of estates were meeting with much resistance and having great difficulty in collecting revenue.

Imhoff's suggestions, in brief, were : to render the jungle zamindars responsible both for the realization of the public revenue and for the police; to exempt the area from the operation of the existing regulations relative to the public sales; to render the persons of the zamindars liable to attachment and imprisonment either for non-payment of the public revenue or other misconduct, and in cases of emergency, to declare their lands forfeited, and to transfer them to the next of kin, or some other person best qualified for the trust.<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Revenue agreed in the main with Imhoff's analysis and proposals. They agreed that "the character and disposition of the people, attached to their chiefs, and in the last degree tenacious of their local customs, renders the interference of Government in the internal management of the lands a source of general dissatisfaction."<sup>2</sup> But, since people equally "blind to the beneficent intentions of their rulers"<sup>2</sup> were to be found in the hill areas of the Ramgarh and Burdwan districts, they proposed to consult the officials

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1. Board to Govt., 19 Apl. 1799, Para 3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 19 of 3 May 1799. ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

2. Ibid. Para. 6.

there, before coming to any decision - which must otherwise result in piecemeal action.

The last-mentioned suggestions about consultations made by the Board was not approved by the Government, though they asked the Board to draft the regulation for such mahals of Midnapur, Burdwan and Ramgarh.<sup>1</sup> The Board, in turn, asked Imhoff to prepare a draft.

Soon, Ernst, Imhoff's successor at Midnapur, also emphasized the need for a new policy towards the paiks. He saw nothing surprising in the violent gestures of despair shown by these tribal chieftains: "It can hardly... be a matter of surprise or indignation that, when the ancient occupants of the lands, without having been charged with any crime or misconduct, saw their supposed rights founded upon long possession of them deliberately invaded in order to provide funds for the charges of the police, and at last found themselves either stripped of all their possessions, or subjected to new demands of rent, which they were incapable of paying, should have despaired of obtaining redress by a proper representation of their grievances, and have seized the first favourable opportunity that presented itself of taking up arms, and of attempting to recover by force what they thought had been taken from them with injustice, especially when it is considered that they are a rude and almost

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1. Resolution, Govt., Beng. Rev. Cons. 21 Of 3 May 1799 (<sup>54</sup>/<sub>3</sub>)  
 No such revenue regulations were passed, but the new police rules were extended on an experimental basis, to Pachet and 17 other estates (except Patkum) in July 1800: Govt. to Birbhum Magt., 31 July 1800, B.C. 28/1987.

a savage race of men without any knowledge of the manners and regulations, and without any experience of the justice and humanity of our Government, which do not appear to have been held out to them as the means to which they ought to look with confidence for redress."<sup>1</sup>

It was on 10 August 1799 that Imhoff sent the draft regulations for these 'Bun [jungle] Mehals' to the Board of Revenue. He again emphasized the futility of the darogas and the necessity of some change in the sale laws<sup>2</sup>, and while his draft was under the consideration of the Board and the Government, he wrote yet another note, in December 1799, justifying his plan of zamindari police.<sup>3</sup> The police darogas he asserted, with eight or ten barkandazes, all strangers to the country, could not face the criminals. Before the troops were sent to the scene, the mischief was always over. The chuars avoided any direct clash with the troops, but they hit at the sepoys from behind the bushes and precipices. Many of the sepoys also succumbed to the unwholesome air of the jungles.<sup>4</sup> The sepoys, with no hope of gaining any distinction but yet in imminent danger, often deteriorated in discipline. Under such circumstances the taking over of the police

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1. T.H.Ernst to Board, 25 May 1799, Para.2, Beng. Rev. Cons. 10 of 21 June 1799. ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )
  2. Imhoff to Govt. 10 Aug. 1799, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 11 of 22 Aug.1799. ( $\frac{128}{42}$ ) Nyabasan, Barajit and Raipur were then disturbed for their sale to non-tribal people.
  3. Imhoff to Board, 21 Dec. 1799, Beng. Rev. Cons. 14 of 14 March 1800. ( $\frac{54}{10}$ ): only the zamindars of Phulkusma and Shamsundarpur, he thought, were of bad character.
  4. Ibid. Para. 3.



duties by the zamindars would relieve the authorities of much worry. Moreover, since most of these jungle zamindars were closely related to one another, they would certainly co-operate with one another in repelling the aggressions of robbers.

Meanwhile, the zamindars of Supur, Ghatshila, Ambikanagar, Manbhum, Barabhum and Chhatna (or their agents), when summoned by Imhoff to Midnapur, had given it in writing that they were ready to undertake the police responsibilities as they had been doing before the regulations were enforced, and that they were ready to execute a written guarantee (muchalaka).<sup>1</sup> They had also requested that some guards might be stationed for a short time at thanas Balrampur, Janda (in Raipur), Barabhum and Ghatshila.<sup>2</sup>

The Board, on 10 January 1800, after considering the draft, and the zamindars' assurances, recommended a zamindari police for these areas, but with a limitation. The zamindars were to be "vested with a joint charge of the police of their respective estates in concert with the Darogahs" appointed under Regulation 22 of 1793. The responsibility of the zamindars would be similar to that of the landholders in Benares under Regulation 17 of 1795 and Regulations 2 and 8

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1. Petition of Raja Gopi Nath Dhal of Supur, Motilal Dubraj, the eldest son of Raja Jagannath Dhal of Ghatshila, Birchand Hakim, Mukhtar of Gopi Nath, the minor zamindar of Ambikanagar, Pratap Naraian, zamindar of Manbhum, Bansi Naiti, mukhtar of Barabhum, and Lachmi Naraian, zamindar of Chhatna: Enclosure, Ibid.
  2. Ibid.

of 1797, with an additional provision to guard against the chuars. They would execute a muchalaka. The paikan lands of the sardars would be restored on the previous quit-rents. Lastly, if any of the zamindars were found disqualified from age, sex etc., their manager would be put in charge of the police.<sup>1</sup>

These proposals were adopted by the Governor General in Council and the Magistrate of Midnapur was authorized to invest the jungle zamindars with the management of the police in their respective estates.<sup>2</sup>

The next important landmark in the administrative history of the Jungle Mahals was the formation of a separate district of that name. In 1805 the Government realized that for "the maintenance of the peace and the support of the General police of that part of the country", it was essential to station an officer in the heart of the Jungle Mahals.<sup>3</sup>

1. Board to Govt. 10 Jan. 1800, Beng. Rev. Cons. 13 of 14 March 1800. (54)  
10) Already in Sept. 1799 the Board had

recommended that for the sake of restoring cultivation, the paiks might be restored to their former lands and that a remission of dues might be allowed: Beng. Rev. Cons. 11. Ibid.

2. Govt. to Board, 6 March 1800, B.C. 97/1986, P. 143. Also Resolution, P. 147. N.L. Chatterjee ['Jungle Mahals', B.P.P. LXXIII, Serial 137.] says that the ghatwali police was introduced by the Regulations of July 31 of 1800. But Regulations passed by the G.G. in C, II, do not mention it, nor the Board's Collections and the Bengal Consultations.
3. Govt. to Register, Nizam-at Adalat, 25 July 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 25 July 1805 (129). On 23 July the Adalat had opposed such a proposal of 14 the Burdwan magistrate.

They therefore passed Regulation XVIII of 1805. The main aim was stated to be the support of the police in these jungly areas by the appointment of a magistrate who would be stationed in this area. It was admitted that the plan of entrusting the zamindars or their managers with a local charge of the police under the rules adopted experimentally in 1800, had been found successful in operation. The regulation therefore provided for an extension of the plan to further areas.<sup>1</sup> The following <sup>2</sup> mahals were included in the new jurisdiction: Pachet, Bagmundi, Bagankodar, Taraf Baleapar, Katras, Hasla, Jhalda, Jharla, Jaipur, Mukundpur, Kismat Nawagarh, Kismat Chutty, Torang, Tuny (Tundi), Nagarkeari and Patkum from the Birbhum district.<sup>3</sup> Sainpahari Shergarh and Bishnupur (except the police jurisdiction of Kotalpur and the contiguous pargana of Bulsai) from the Burdwan district; and Chhatna, Barabhum, Supur, Ambikanagar, Simlapal and Bellaidihi from the Midnapur district.

The police in this new district might be committed to the zamindars or their managers, either with or without the cooperation of the police darogas. They were to maintain such establishments of paiks for the maintenance of the police, within their respective zamindaris, as might be fixed by the magistrate, with the approval of the government. A periodical

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 13 Dec. 1805 ( $\frac{129}{18}$ )

2. Ibid.

3. Formerly they were in the Ramgarh district,

list of such establishments was to be submitted to the magistrate.

Where darogas were appointed, the zamindars would assist them. Moreover, the latter, after taking charge of the police, would send all persons charged with murder, robbery and other heinous crimes, within 24 hours after their apprehension, either to the nearest police daroga or to the magistrate or to the officer commanding the nearest military detachment.

The digwars, paiks or other police officers of a zamindar<sup>1</sup> would not be ordinarily sent into the estate of any other zamindar without the order of the magistrate. It was their special duty to check and apprehend the chuars and other plunderers. "Any zemindar who may be convicted of having connived at the assemblage or passage of choars" would be punished.<sup>1</sup>

It was under this regulation that the ghatwali police functioned after 1805 in these mahals and in Dhalbhum. The efficiency of this police was testified to by several later reports. In 1810, for instance, a judge of the Calcutta court of circuit wrote that the improved state of cultivation and the decrease in the cases of a heinous nature in the Jungle Mahals was to be ascribed to "the efficient system of police there".<sup>2</sup> W. Blunt, the magistrate of the district, was so

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1. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 16 of 13 Dec. 1805 (128/18) They would also be responsible for all the property stolen in their jurisdiction.
  2. D.Campbell to Govt. 27 Jan, 1810, Para.5, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 27 of 2 Feb. 1810. (130)

impressed with the services rendered by the ghatwals, digwars and others that in 1810 he appointed several of them as guards to protect the merchants and other travellers on the great Benares road passing through Pachet and other parganas of his district: "No other description of guards is requisite or would be able to ensure to travellers an equal degree of safety and protection with that which a sirdar Ghautwal is enabled to afford."<sup>1</sup>

When in 1812 the magistrate of the district recommended the abolition of the ghatwali establishment of Jaibalea in Bishnupur, Blunt, as the Superintendent of Police, Lower Provinces, opposed the proposal vehemently: "It is chiefly, if not entirely by their means, and not by the Thannah police establishments, that the tranquility of the jungles has been preserved, and the police brought to its present state of efficiency."<sup>2</sup> He pointed out that by this harsh measure a class of people, who knew no other occupation than the use of arms and no other means of subsistence than the lands assigned to them for performing police duties, and who were active, courageous and expert in the use of arms, would be hard hit. Their duties, he asserted, could not be performed by any other description of police officers and

1. W. Blunt to Govt., 16 Apl. 1810, Para. 6. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 27 Apl. 1810. (<sup>130</sup>/<sub>15</sub>) Also see Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 43 & 45 of 8 June 1810 (<sup>130</sup>/<sub>17</sub>)
2. Blunt to Govt., 3 June 1812, Para. 5, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 41 of 13 June 1812. (<sup>130</sup>/<sub>52</sub>)

barkandazes, "who are generally both the most indolent and timid class of police officers."<sup>1</sup>

That the official police was quite ineffective in these tribal areas was proved beyond doubt. In Barabhum and in other disturbed estates of the new district, they could do nothing against the insurgents. In 1817 the Magistrate of Midnapur also referred to the inefficiency of the regular police establishment. The daroga, he said, was not successful in one out of fifty cases he investigated.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, new police stations were opened in several estates and the daroga system of police was introduced to keep an eye on the zamindars. Thus, Dhalbhum, which, though a jungle estate, had been left in the Midnapur district, Barabhum, Pachet and several other estates came under the clutches of the crafty and corrupt non-tribal darogas. In 1814 Baleapar's zamindari police was dissolved and it was included in Churulia thana.<sup>3</sup> There were a number of cases of police powers being continued upon the succession to a zamindari - Prithi Singh received such a sanad when he succeeded his brother Jorawar Singh in August 1814, and Digambar Singh was invested with police powers when he succeeded his father as zamindar of Bagankodar<sup>4</sup> - but the trend was away

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1. Ibid. Para.6.

2. W. Enver, off. Magt., to W. Blunt, supdt. of police, 19 May 1817, Para.4. Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 49 of 6 June 1817. (132)  
59.

3. Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 41 of 9 Aug. 1814. (131)  
45.

4. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 18 of 23 Aug. 1814. (131) and 49 of  
6 Jan. 1818 (133)  
20.

from the 1805 system and towards a wider use of the official police. With the renewed attempt to impose a non-tribal system there grew once more the popular discontent with extortionate outsiders, and the particular discontent of the ignored ghatwals. In 1832 that discontent again boiled over.

We have so far attempted a general view of the relationship between the East India Company and the tribal people of the Jungle Mahals, as it developed in the half century after the grant of the Diwani. To understand the detailed course of the 1832 disturbances, however, it is necessary to look rather more closely at the political situation in each of the mahals. The remainder of the chapter will therefore be devoted to a review of conditions in each of the important estates.

#### Barabhum:-

The largest of these estates was Barabhum, which lay on the western borders of the area, and was bounded on the west by Patkum, on the south-west by Singhbhum, on the south by Dhalbhum, on the east by the small jagir of Koilapal and Manbhum and on the north by Pachet and Bagmundi. In 1833 much of its borders were still "clothed with dense jungle" though the centre, north and east was open, undulating



country producing fine sugarcane and well cultivated.<sup>1</sup> The ghats (passes or valley approaches) were ten in number, of which the four most important - Dhadka, Sutrakhani, Punj-Sardari and Tinsaya - were predominantly jungle - covered, and maintained in that condition so as to preserve their strength.<sup>2</sup>

Barabhum was inhabited predominantly by the Bhumijes, with some Kurmis, Santhals and others and "a slight sprinkling of Brahmins, Rajpoots, Bania traders and Mahomedans."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the Dalma hills two tribes called Paharias and Kharias lived.<sup>4</sup> According to a military officer, they (the Paharias and Kharias) were so familiar with the hills and jungles that like the Red Indians of America, at night they could guide the travellers "through the endless ups and downs of the Doolma" with the help of the stars and by feeling the barks of the trees.<sup>5</sup> The Bhumijes on the whole, were "sincere and honest, and their word may be depended on."<sup>6</sup> But they had already given up their tribal language

in favour of Bengali, and had also adopted several settled ways of their Hindu neighbours.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, they remained famous for their marauding activities even in the early days of the British rule, hence their common title of chuar

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1. W.Dent, Jt. Commissioner, Chota Nagpur and Jungle Mahals, to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para 6. B.C. 1501/58886.

2. Ibid. Para. 2.

3. Ibid. Para. 3.

4. Ibid. Also DG. Manbhum, 268.

5. A subaltern, "Sketch of the campaign", East Indian United Service Journal, No V, Part I, 480.

6. W. Dent. to Govt. 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 6. B.C. 1501/58886.

7. Ibid. Para. 5.

(robber). They were "rather a turbulent and refractory race" showing "an alacrity to engage in choaree" a disposition which was kept alive by the disputes in the raja's family.<sup>1</sup> They were "short in stature, stout muscular, and not unlike their neighbours the Coles with whom they intermarry".<sup>2</sup>

The local leaders of the Bhumijes were the sardar ghatwals, marcher lords, who, like the mundas and mankis of Chota Nagpur proper, had organised the tribal occupation and clearance of the land. These ghatwals, village or circle heads, guardians of the passes and of the local peace, occupied a taraf (jagir) at a nominal rent, as reward for their services, and maintained a permanent body of retainers - digwars, ghatwals, sadials and tabedars,<sup>3</sup> permanently under

1. Ibid. Para. 3.

2. Ibid.

3. tabedar was on the lowest rung of the ladder, similar to the chaukidar or gorait in Chota Nagpur and other areas. Sadials, ghatwals and digwars were almost synonymous and formed a connecting link between the sardars and the tabedars. Thus the Tinsaya Sardar ghatwal had, in 1832, 27 sadials (inferiors) and 104 tabedars; that of Punj-Sardari 5 sadials and about 500 tabedars; that of Sutrakhani 17 sadials and about 600 tabedars; and that of Dhadka 2 sadials and 300 tabedars: Russell, J.M. Magt., to Govt. 15 May 1832, Para. 4. , B.C. 1501/58887. According to Gokhale, op.cit. Para. 185 "The lesser Mankis [of Chotanagpur] were the sadials [of Barabhum] who were grouped under the super Mankis known as Taraf Sardars. The village headmen became the village Sardars or ghatwals with the Khuntkattidas serving under them as Paiks or Tabedars". Also see Sifton, op.cit. Para. 26. According to Dalton, op.cit. 176, these Bhumi ghatwals were "the people (like the Mundari Bhúinhas in chutia Nágpúr, the Bhúiyas in Bonai, Gángpúr, Keonjhur, & c, Gonds in Sirgúja and Udaipur) to whom the defence of the country was entrusted."

arms. At need they could call upon the support of the whole Bhumij population. As has been seen, the turbulence of these feudal leaders and their quasi-military forces compelled the British Government to make a place for them in their administration as local police.

How martial these people really were was a matter of dispute. Bradley-Birt wrote of them as "restive and uncertain", "wild and unkempt",<sup>1</sup> and Dalton as "once the terror of the surrounding districts,"<sup>2</sup> Risley, on the other hand, denied that they had ever been more than marauders: "the circumstance, however, that they took a more or less prominent part in a series of marauding attacks on an unarmed and unwarlike population affords no ground for a belief in the existence among them of any real military instinct; and in fact they are conspicuous for the dislike of discipline, which is one of the prominent characteristics of the Kolarian races."<sup>3</sup> Casual observers were just as divided as the anthropologists - a writer in the India Gazette<sup>4</sup> described them as "timid, cowardly, mean, despicable, fighting only in ambush", but a military officer who fought against them, drew a romantic picture of their gallantry: "Brave as those by whom they were subsequently subdued [the British] - active as the leopard who sports on the heights of their jungle clad hills,

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1. Chota-Nagpore, 159.

2. Ethnology, 174.

3. Tribes, I, 127.

4. 25 Apr. 1833.

addicted to the delights of plunder in a far greater degree than to the cultivation of the soil, - the heart of every Bhoomij beat responsive while the slogan of their Singhboom and Tumar neighbours rang in their ears."<sup>1</sup> Hunter noted that they were a stronger and more tenacious race than the Santhals, and in the capacity for resisting the encroachments of Hindus, they seemed to stand midway between the Mundas of Lohardaga [ChotaNagpur proper] and the Larkas or Hos of Singhbhum, being hardly less exclusive than the latter race.<sup>2</sup> But though of a turbulent and independent disposition, they sometimes showed a child-like simplicity.<sup>3</sup>

Over the ghatwals, and tarafdars or sardars was the ruling family of the raja, with its family residence at Barabazar. By the British period, the general Bhumij mass had come to be looked down upon by the raja and his family<sup>4</sup> because the latter had been hinduised probably in the 18th century.<sup>5</sup> The raja, like the chief of Patkum, claimed to be

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1. A Subaltern, op.cit. No.V, Part I, 474.

2. Statistical Account of Bengal, XVII, 274.

3. when "a batch of these innocent and harmless beings were brought into camp" and they were shown the things which were quite new to them, one of them said that "among all the wonders of the camp, there was one beat everything, and it was a - washerman's Donkey!":  
A Subaltern, op.cit. 480.

4. Risley, op.cit. I, 127. "The great bulk of the Bhumij, who are simple cultivators and labourers, stand on a far lower social level than the landholding members of the tribe".

5. Ibid.: Risley thinks that all the chiefs of the Chota-Nagpur plateau were hinduized either in the 18th or the 19th century. Mohan Singh a sardar ghatwal of Taraf Sutrahani became a pseudo-Rajput in late 19th century.

a kshatriya, descended from the great legendary emperor Vikramaditya: "The traditional origin of the Barābhum family connects them closely with the adjoining estate of Patkum and its mythical founder Vikramaditya..., their family legend is given by Colonel Dalton as a specimen of the skill of the Bhumij zamindars in making pedigrees."<sup>1</sup> "The zamindars of Barabhum, Dhalbhum, Manbhum, Patkum and Bagmundi," states Risley, "probably belong to the Bhumij tribe, though they now call themselves Rajputs."<sup>2</sup> In fact, all these chiefs are "descended from a self-elected chief or Mānki of a group of Bhumij, or Munda villages."<sup>3</sup>

The first chief with whom the British came in direct contact was Raja Vivek Narain, a man "long in arms against the Government," who was eventually forced to abdicate in favour of his eldest son Raghunath Narain.<sup>4</sup> With that installation began a long series of disputes between British notions of primogeniture and the tribal custom which held that it was the son of the chief queen, and not necessarily the first born, who succeeded to the zaminadri. Raghunath Narain, though the eldest born, was the son of a younger wife of the raja, and his claim was, therefore, seriously challenged by Lachhuman Singh<sup>5</sup> who, though younger in age, had a better

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1. DG. Manbhum, 264. Story of Nath Varaha and Kes Varaha.

2. Risley, op.cit. 127.

3. D.G. Manbhum, 270.

4. Beng. Rev. Cons. 4 of 22 May 1800 (<sup>54</sup>/<sub>11</sub>)

5. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 17 Oct. 1794. (<sup>128</sup>/<sub>15</sub>)

claim according to local custom.<sup>1</sup> But inspite of the support of the people, the fight of Lachhuman Singh and his brother Bharat Singh proved in vain in the face of the military help that Raghunath got from the British.<sup>2</sup>

With the death of Raja Raghunath Narain in 1798 the same sort of struggle began between his two sons, Ganga Govind Singh and Madhava Singh.<sup>3</sup> The British authorities supported the former because of his seniority in age, while the latter was supported by the tribal sardars<sup>4</sup> because he was the son of the elder queen. Some of the neighbouring tribal zamindars also helped the latter, and the total strength of the chuars who fought for Madhava Singh rose to four thousand.<sup>5</sup>

These disturbances proved the unsuitability of the regulations with regard to the law of succession for these tribal areas - and incidentally showed how useless was the daroga system of police. But though Strachey, the Midnapur magistrate, was asked to draft new regulations, he failed to grasp the basis of tribal succession customs, though the Government did legislate in 1800 for an undivided succession,

1. Lachhuman Singh opposed Raghunath Narain after he attained his majority: Petition, Pubeen Singh and others, Enclosure No.3. to W.Dent to Govt. 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 2 of 1 Aug. 1794. ( $\frac{128}{13}$ ); 26 of 11 March 1796 ( $\frac{128}{27}$ );

3 & 4 of 15 July 1796 ( $\frac{128}{28}$ ). 51 of 10 June 1796 ( $\frac{128}{28}$ );

69 of 23 Sept. 1796 ( $\frac{128}{29}$ ); Lachhuman Singh eventually died in the Midnapur Jail. His son Ganga Narain was the leader of the tribal insurgents in 1832-33.<sup>54</sup>

3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 3 May 1799, ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

4. I.Imhoff to Board, 21 March 1799, Beng.Rev.Cons. 10 of 12 Apl. 1799. ( $\frac{24}{2}$ )

5. Beng.Cr. Judl Cons. 5 of 31 Oct.1799. ( $\frac{128}{44}$ )

which was good tribal custom.<sup>1</sup> So when the case came up in the Sadr Diwani Adalat in 1803 it was laid down that the Barabhum estate should go to the eldest son "no matter whether his mother was first or second wife",<sup>2</sup> and Ganga Govind Singh was duly installed.

So the disturbances continued in Barabhum, with much bloodshed and plunder.<sup>3</sup> The tribal sardars combined to support Madhava Singh, though Ganga Narain, the grandson of Raja Vivek Narain, son of the excluded Lachhuman Singh, and uncle of the two contenders, came over to Ganga Govind Singh's side.<sup>4</sup> The situation became so serious that the Midnapur authorities found themselves helpless, and the Government was forced to order the arrest of Madhava Singh if he refused to rest satisfied with the allowance sanctioned to him by the court.<sup>5</sup>

In July 1800 the important step was taken of instituting the ghatwali (zamindari) police system in Barabhum, as in the other jungle estates, an experiment confirmed in 1805 by Regulation XVIII.<sup>6</sup> At the same time the Jungle Mahals were made a separate administrative unit, though the district remained under the supervision of the Birbhum authorities

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1. Regulation X of 11 Dec. 1800.: Regulations Passed by the G.G.in C. II, 207.

2. W.Dent, to Govt., 4 Sept.1833, Para.10. B.C.1501/58886.

3. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June 1805. (129)

4. Ibid.

5. Beng. Cr. Judl.Cons. 2 & 3 of 11 July 1805. (129)

6. See p.59 of this chapter.



for some time. The change was not, however, entirely satisfactory, for the control which could be exercised over Barabhum from distant Bankura was necessarily nominal, and the raja used his new powers in the most arbitrary way. In 1811 he went so far as to attack a sardar ghatwal who had helped Madhava in 1805, burning his village and killing and wounding several people.<sup>1</sup> For this criminal act he was arrested, tried and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.<sup>2</sup> Yet, after his release he was continued in nominal charge of the ghatwali police, because, as the magistrate pointed out, the estate was "one of the wildest and least civilized of any one of the jungle Estates, the inhabitants consist chiefly, if not entirely of the people who are known under the denomination of chooars, and are completely subservient to the will and pleasure of the zemindar, and their respective surdars."<sup>3</sup> However a police thana was established at Barabazar to keep a vigilant eye on the raja.<sup>4</sup> The raja was treated as a zamindar of Grant's second class, i.e. one made tributary by conquest, treaty or convention, without either full political or proprietary rights and yet not a mere official revenue collector.<sup>5</sup> The Permanent Settlement was in theory applied to the estate in 1800, but in practice, because

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1. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 14 of 6 March 1811. ( $\frac{130}{29}$ )

2. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 41 of 29 Apl. 1814. ( $\frac{131}{37}$ )

3. A.B.Tod to Judges of the Court of Circuit, 9 Apl. 1814.  
Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 48 of 29 Apl. 1814. ( $\frac{131}{37}$ )

4. Ibid: at a monthly expense of Rs.96.

5. D.G.Manbhum, 194.

of the inaccessibility of the area, and the attachment of the tribal people to their chief, the control of the Bankura authorities remained very slight. Their contact with Barabhum was limited to a very occasional tour and the ceremonial installation of the chief. Naturally enough, the raja and his diwan remained free to do very much as they liked.

His diwan was his half brother Madhava Singh who, being a cunning man, had realized the futility of any further attempt to resist the British military force, had composed his differences with the raja and eventually had secured this key post. In that way he was able to deprive Ganga Narain, his personal foe, of the revenue of taraf Punj-Sardari, which he "had been permitted to hold after his father's death."<sup>1</sup> These developments had a direct bearing on the unrest of 1832-33.

A word on the character of the raja, the diwan and Ganga Narain, a cousin of both, is necessary here. The raja became imbecile in later years,<sup>2</sup> and was under the uncontrolled influence of his crafty diwan. Both the diwan and his foe Ganga Narain were cunning, but while the former, because of his moneylending business and several oppressive acts,

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.11, B.C.1501/58886. For Punj-Sardari (or Panch-Sardari) see p. of this chapter.

2. In 1824 the question of his insanity and imbecility was raised by the Midnapur authorities. But the Sadr Diwani Adalat decided in the raja's favour (vide Beng. Rev. Cons. 17 of 14 May 1824. ( 60 ). But by 1833 he became worse etill and had to be replaced by his son.

became extremely unpopular among the tribal people, the latter, making play with his destitution and showing great organizing capacity, won over the whole tribal mass to his side. Madhava, the diwan, was "far superior in intellect and energy to the remainder of the family," but he employed his intellect to amass personal wealth and power.<sup>1</sup> Ganga Narain, on the other hand, was able to combine a campaign to relieve the people of Madhava's oppressions with his own personal plans for revenge.<sup>2</sup> As a result, long after his death, people remembered him with esteem for his gallantry, exploits and organising capacity.<sup>3</sup>

#### Dhalbhum:-

The estate of Dhalbhum (or Ghatkhila), to the south of Barabhum, comprised fifty or sixty miles of the central valley of the Subarnarekha river, which divided the pargana into two almost equal parts. The ground falls from over 1800 feet in the south to rather more than 1400 feet in the north, is flanked by the rugged mass of hills on its southern boundary, and separated from Barabhum in the north by an almost continuous mountain range called Dalma.

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.11, B.C.1501/58886.
  2. A.Subaltern; op.cit. No.V, Part I, 479.
  3. E.Thompson, Life of Metcalfe, 306.

It was inhabited by Bhumijes, whose manners and habits were much the same as those of their kinsmen in Barabhum and other Jungle Mahals. The Dhal chiefs, the zamindars of the estate, were of the Bhumij tribe, but like the Chota-Nagpur rajas had been provided by the Brahmans with a fictitious noble ancestry.<sup>1</sup> Reid, in his Settlement Report of 1912, states that "it is tolerably certain that the founder of the dynasty was a member of the primitive Bhumij race of the country. He was probably selected by the other Bhumij chiefs, the ancestors of the Ghatwals, as their feudal lord to represent them in their dealing with other potentates, to repel aggression from without, and to preserve some semblance of order within."<sup>2</sup>

It has been seen how the Dhalbhum chief Raja Jagannath Dhal after a decade's defiance, agreed to pay tribute to the British authorities in 1777. This settlement (by Higginson) was confirmed under the Decennial Settlement of 1793.<sup>3</sup> The gross rental of the 145 villages of the pargana had been estimated at Rs. 4,596, but that seemed obviously to be understated.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Dalton believed the raja's ancestor was a washerman!.

2. J.Reid, Dhalbhum Settlement Report, Para.11.

3. The Midnapur collector in 1794 wrote that the mahal was "the property of the hill zemindar, and has been held at a fixed jumma from the time of Mr.Higginson in the year 1194 [1184?] which having been approved of by you as the standard for fixing the Decennial jumma, has accordingly been adhered to in the formation of the present settlement": Collector to Board, Para.7, 25 Feb. 1794, Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 27 March 1794. (53)

4. Reid, op.cit. Para.10.

The Permanent Settlement could not be extended to this estate before 1800 because of a dispute regarding succession. Finally in 1800 it was settled with Jagannath Dhal at a revenue of Rs.4267.<sup>1</sup> The next raja was Ramchandra Dhal who was suspected of protecting Baijnath Singh, the rebel chief of Dampara, in 1810. After his death in 1822, Baikunth Dhal succeeded, but he died only three years after.<sup>2</sup> His brother and heir, the minor Chitreswar Dhal, who succeeded in 1825, lived till 1863, was in jail for some time in 1833, and was popularly called "the Buddha Raja."<sup>3</sup>

Beyond fixing the terms of the revenue settlement the British authorities interfered as little as possible in the internal affairs of the estate - warned perhaps by the long resistance they had met before 1777 to their penetration. They laid down, in the settlement, that the raja should not collect any abwabs from the ryots, nor resume any debottar, brahmottar, mahtran or other tenures without the permission of the Government, should not give shelter to the thieves and robbers, and should produce offenders before the faujdari court when required.<sup>4</sup> He was also made responsible for the

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1. D.G.Singhbhum, 180. This was probably another Jagannath Dhal, not the one whom the British had installed in 1777.
  2. Dent, to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.41, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. D.G.Singhnum, 180.
  4. Reid, op.cit. Para.9. The first two were grants of lands for religious purposes (e.g. the upkeep of the temples and the maintenance of the priests); the third was a service tenure.



safety of the travellers and traders. But owing to the inaccessibility of the area and the turbulent disposition of the tribal inhabitants, the British authorities could not exercise any effective control over this estate. Thus the zamindar was "left, as was his compeer of Chota Nagpur[proper] pretty much to his own resources, and he administered the country, as best he could, according to his own lights."<sup>1</sup>

In 1793, under Regulation XXII, a company police thana was established at Narsing-garh, but the non-tribal daroga, who was posted there as a representative of British authority, proved very corrupt. He was dismissed in 1794 and prosecuted in the diwani adalat for taking bribes from smugglers of salt.<sup>2</sup> In 1800, therefore, the decision to recognise the ghatwali police of the jungle areas was applied to Dhalbhum, and on 24 March the raja was formally vested with the powers of a police daroga. He undertook to keep under his orders all the paiks, digwars, sardars, mahafazans, etc. of his estate.<sup>3</sup> He was to protect the travellers and to prevent robbery, murder and other heinous crimes. He was required to send all miscreants to Midnapur forthwith, and to obey all the orders of the magistrate.

In 1805, though this estate was not included in the newly created Jungle Mahals district, the rules for a zamindari police prescribed for the mahals under Regulation XVIII

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1. Ibid. Para. 12.

2. Resolution of Govt. Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 9 of 6 June 1794  
(<sup>128</sup>/<sub>12</sub>)

3. Reid, op.cit. Paras. 12 and 18. The official police daroga was recalled: B.C. 98/1987.

of that year, were applied to this estate also. Raja Ram chandra Dhal was put in charge of the police.<sup>1</sup>

In 1810, however, following a revolt by Baijnath Singh of Dampara, the Midnapur magistrate suggested that the police thana at Narsing-garh should be revived;<sup>2</sup> and that was done. But the futility of the arrangement was soon realized, and in 1814 the Midnapur magistrate reported that the official police might be "dispensed with" and the police officials recalled "without any apprehension for the future good management or welfare of the purgunnah as the Zumeendar, in common with other Jungul Zumeendars in this district is invested with the powers of police."<sup>3</sup> It is to the superintendence of the zamindar, he went on, "and not to the vigilance or exertions of the police officers stationed at Nursingurh that I attribute the tranquillity that reigns in that extensive jungul estate."<sup>4</sup>

The raja exercised his police functions, under the zamindari police system, through an establishment of paiks or ghatwals. These men, of whose names and remuneration, lists (isanavis) were furnished to the magistrate, were paid

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1. Register, Nizamat Adalat, to Govt., 3 July 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 11 July 1805 (129)  
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2. Midnapur Magt. to Govt., 20 Feb. 1810, Para. 7. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 23 March 1810. (130)  
13

3. H. Hodgson to Govt., 12 Aug. 1814, Para. 4, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 22 of 16 Aug. 1814. (131)  
46

4. Ibid. Para. 5.

by grants of land at easy quit-rents (panchak). They were in fact, the descendants of the raja's vassals, who had assisted in the original settlement on the land and had formed the raja's militia. The lands they held were held by tenures as old as that of their chief, and it was only with the introduction of British legal notions and with the hinduization of the raja that the notion arose of the raja being the real owner of the whole pargana, and of the ghatwals being his servants, holding lands by service tenures.<sup>1</sup>

Two important developments in this estate during the early decades of the 19th century deserve mention. The first was the revolt in Dampara under Baijnath Singh, and the second the mismanagement and undue influence of Thakur Jugal Kishore, during and after the raja's minority.

Dampara<sup>2</sup> was the stronghold of Baijnath Singh, a sardar ghatwal, who in the 18th century defied the British authority for about a decade. Towards the close of that century he took possession of the lands of several neighbouring zamindars and levied contributions from many more, under a variety of threats.<sup>3</sup> In May 1800 he was attacked and

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1. Reid, op.cit. Paras. 85-86. In 1837 there were 284 ghatwali tenures in 14 tarafs of Dhalbhum with  $516\frac{3}{4}$  Hals (ploughs) of land and 665 sardars, sadials and tabedars: Ibid. Para. 87.

2. It was on the border of Barabhum, 40 miles west of Midnapur: Beng. Cr. Judl.Cons. 43 of 19 Jan. 1810. ( $\frac{130}{11}$ )

3. Ibid.

driven out by British troops.<sup>1</sup> Dampara was thereupon handed over to Ramchandra Dhal, the Dhalbhum (Ghatshila) raja, even though he seemed favourably inclined towards the rebel.

The raja did, in fact, soon permit the return of Baijnath Singh, who resumed his depredations. So widespread did these become, that British troops were again called in against him in 1809-10.<sup>2</sup> On this occasion, the Dhalbhum raja was arrested for his supposed complicity, but it later became apparent that Baijnath was being supported by Goman Gunjan (the sardar ghatwal of Dhadka in Barabhum), by Sham Sardar of Kasipur (in Pachet), Bir Singh Mahapater, the Jagirdar of Koilapal, and by several other chiefs. So, after the seizure of Baijnath, his brothers, sons and associates, the Dhalbhum raja was forgiven and released, and Dampara again entrusted to him.<sup>3</sup>

The operations in Dampara, besides revealing to the British authorities the natural strength of the country,

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1. Strachey, Midnapur Magt., to Govt., 17 May 1800, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 43/3 of 19 Jan. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{11}$ ).
  2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 21 of 15 Dec. 1809 ( $\frac{130}{9}$ ); 40 of 19 Jan. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{11}$ ).
  3. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 to 8 and 12 of 6 Feb. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{12}$ ); 6 of 13 Apl. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{14}$ ); 17 of 29 June 1810 ( $\frac{130}{18}$ ).

The Barabhum raja, who helped in his apprehension, was rewarded. Baijnath died in jail: Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 13 Apl. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{14}$ ). Also see Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 18 of 29 June 1810 ( $\frac{130}{18}$ ). History repeated itself in 1832 when Ragunath Singh, the nephew of Baijnath, revolted in Dampara and was reinstated by the Dhalbhum raja in his jagir.

opened their eyes to the existence of a network of ties between the jungle zamindars. Thus the zamindar of Barabhum was found to be nearly related to the Dhalbhum chief, while the latter was closely connected with several other zamindars of the area.<sup>1</sup> Not only that, the wide influence of the Dhalbhum chief over his tribal ryots was proved beyond doubt: "The zemeendaree of Ghutseela [Dhalbhum] is of great extent and the zemindar possesses very considerable influence. The success with which that influence has been hitherto exerted in the protection of Bydenauth Sing for such a long time, notwithstanding the efforts repeatedly made either to apprehend or expel him, seems to point out the necessity of interposing an authority to control it and to serve as a check on the conduct of Ram Chander Dhole or any other person who may hereafter possess the estate."<sup>2</sup> The Midnapur magistrate later pointed out that "it was not until the person of Ramchunder Dhol the zemindar was placed under restraint, that the apprehension of the notorious chooar Bydnath Sing was effected."<sup>3</sup>

But inspite of these lessons, nothing was done to provide any closer supervision over Dhalbhum affairs. As a

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 23 March 1810. ( $\frac{130}{13}$ ) ;  
5 of 13 Apl. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{14}$ )
  2. Midnapur Magt. to Govt., 20 Feb. 1810, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 23 March 1810 ( $\frac{130}{13}$ )
  3. H. Hodgson to Govt., 25 Aug. 1812. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 1 of 26 Sept. 1812 ( $\frac{131}{4}$ )



consequence, after 1825 Jugalkishore Dhal, the guardian of the minor Chitreswar Dhal, was able to become a tyrant in the zamindari. An intriguing and unprincipled man, he grossly mismanaged the estate, stopped paying the revenues of the Government, dismissed the old and trusted diwan and his assistants, and with the help of a few non-tribal adventurers exploited the pargana for his own benefit.<sup>1</sup> He dispossessed several tribal tenants, increased the rents of the ryots and established new cesses. He also engaged in trade and took a share in the profits of the salt daroga and merchants.

Even when Chitreswar attained his majority in 1829, things remained much the same because he was weak and incapable: "the weakness of the young Raja's intellect and his utter unfitness for all business, rendered him still the tool of his crafty and designing uncle".<sup>2</sup> When he did try to assert his authority, it only led to a family feud, and eventually to the unrest of 1833.

One might ask how this state of affairs was allowed to continue inspite of the supervisory function of the Midnapur authorities. The answer is that the control over this pargana was only nominal<sup>3</sup> and that the company's immediate

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.42, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Ibid. Para. 46. It was almost at this very time that the Raja of the Chota Nagpur estate gave a foothold to the Sikh, Muslim and Hindu adventurers and fortune-seekers. Madhava Singh, the diwan and brother of the Barabhum Raja, was exploiting that estate in the same period, in much the same way as Jugal Kishore Dhal in Dhalbhum.

3. The British authorities had no interest beyond the realization of the annual tribute and attending to the installation ceremonies.

interest in Dhalbhum disappeared with the eclipse of the Marathas, against whom it had been a barrier. As late as 1817 the Midnapur collector opposing the proposal of appointing ganungoes in this and other jungle estates under Regulation XIII of 1817, pointed out the natural aversion of the tribal people towards such innovations, and the obstacles offered by the face of the country.<sup>1</sup>

#### Pachet and Jhalda:-

Pachet, which lay to the north of Barabhum, was an estate "of a considerable extent, but only partially cultivated."<sup>2</sup> Some open and well cultivated land was found in the eastern and southern parts, but there were extensive jungles near Kesargarh, the residence of the raja, and on the north-west frontier towards the Ramgarh district. These, with the Panchkote hill, a massif, some three miles long and 1600 feet high, from which the estate derived its name, provided a confusion of "mountains, rocks, fastnesses and jungles, where the most inconsiderable banditti may lurk, secure against the attacks of regular troops."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Beng. Rev. Cons. 70 of 16 Jan. 1818 (57/28)

2. W. Dent. to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 30, B.C. 1501/58886.

3. Ramgarh spl. Commr. to Govt., 17 Jan. 1799, Para. 7, Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 20 May 1799 (54/3)

The population of the pargana was almost entirely Bhumij, and lived by cultivation and hunting, enlivened by occasional raids on neighbouring areas. Only with the opening of the great Benares road through Pachet, late in the 18th century, did the first non-tribal traders and other adventurers visit the area in any numbers. The Pachet raja was also a Bhumij, though the family, by the 18th century, had been hinduised and provided with a genealogy linking the first raja with the twelfth maharaja of Ujjain.<sup>1</sup> The Padshahnamah of Shah Jahan described the raja as a commander of only 300 horse, but within the hill area the raja was a very considerable figure, "co-equal to the highest, and superior to almost all the others upon the company's frontier and in the Maharatta frontiers, which border upon it, many of whom in consideration of that circumstance, receive the Tillock [Tilak] or installation, upon their accession to their respective Rajes [estates] from him, and with many of whom he is connected by intermarriages."<sup>2</sup>

Over their own people the rajas for centuries had exercised a sovereign authority, wielding powers of life and death. "These circumstances would naturally beget in the uncivilized people of the country whose minds could scarcely

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1. The Manbhum District Gazetteer (P.282) instances this genealogy as typical of "the manner in which fanciful and mythical traditions, mainly complimentary to the family, have made it impossible to trace with any sort of accuracy the real history of any one of the great zemindari families." Also see Dalton, 'Notes on a tour in Maunbhoom,' J.A.S.B. XXXV, Part I.
  2. Ramgarh spl. Commr. to Govt., 17 Jan. 1799, Para.9, Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 20 May 1799 (54)  
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conceive any idea of superior greatness a high degree of awe and veneration, for their ancient lords."<sup>1</sup>

On the north and north-west of the estate were a group of twelve minor marcher lords, called the Panchakote petty zamindars, subordinate to the Pachet raja. Of the twelve - Bag mundi, Bagankodar, Jaipur, Mukundpur, Hasla, Torang, Katras, Nawagarh, Jharia, Tundi, Pandra and Jhalda, the last was brought into dependent status only in the mid-18th century.<sup>2</sup>

With the British penetration of this area, the raja gradually lost his independent and superior status. Pachet was joined for administrative purposes with Bishnupur and Birbhum under a single supervisor.<sup>3</sup> This estate also found itself more heavily taxed than ever before. Prior to 1765 Pachet, as a Peshkashi or tributary state, paid only Rs.16,000 a year to the Mughal authorities. In 1766 the Company, through Muhammad Reza Khan, raised the revenue demand to Rs. 30,000. In 1770 Pachet, like the rest of Bengal, suffered a terrible loss of inhabitants during the great famine of that year.<sup>4</sup> But in 1771, pursuing a policy of squeezing blood from a stone, the Company levied a special demand of Rs.144,954.<sup>5</sup> The next year, after disturbances about revenue farms, a separate supervisor was appointed for

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1. Ibid.

2. Gokhale, Manbhum Settlement Report, Para 188.

3. D.G.Manbhum, 56.

4. Home Misc. No.206, (2), 147-148.

5. Firminger, Fifth Report, 399.

Jhalda and Pachet - the Manbhum District Gazetteer records that none of the revenue farmers had been ready to renew his lease for fear of a decrease in the revenue yield "as there had been a wholesale desertion of the land by the ryots in consequence of the oppression of the superior farmers."<sup>1</sup> The man who eventually secured revenue farmers, a certain Ram Kant Biswas was appointed diwan as a reward for his pains. In 1774-1775 further attempts were made to increase the revenue.<sup>2</sup>

No sooner were these troubles over than the tribal people of Jhalda, Patkum and other neighbouring estates broke into rebellion, presumably as a protest against the tightening of the British control over this area. A separate officer (known from 1781 as the Collector of Pachet),<sup>3</sup> was thereupon appointed to keep a closer control over this danger spot. The measure had no effect. In November 1782 the Committee of Revenue admitted that the zamindar of Pachet "for want of some sepoy's stationed in the district, is exposed to daily depredations from the petty Mahals of Jelda [Jhalda], that the zamindars of Nowaghur and Jerrea [Jharia] have lately plundered the villages of Cottapulta and Potagee, and that the Chokeedars had been attacked and two of their people wounded.....We understand both the zemindars of Jerrea and Patcoom are [so] little subordinate to the authority of

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1. D.G.Manbhum, 56.

2. Home Misc. 206 (2)pl48.

3. Ibid. 563.



Government that the latter has not paid any revenue for four years, and that the former now withholds his rents."<sup>1</sup> To deal with the critical situation, the Government sent Major James Crawford, commanding in Ramgarh, to quell the disturbances in Jhalda and to take charge of the revenue collections there.<sup>2</sup>

In March 1783 Mangal Shah, the tribal leader of Jhalda surrendered on a promise that his life would be spared.<sup>3</sup> Crawford was asked to keep him in confinement until he gave security for his future good behaviour.<sup>4</sup> By July Jhalda was on the way to a settlement and Jharia, too, had been pacified. Crawford then recommended that the people of this area and also of Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies on the west and of Pachet proper on the east should be disarmed<sup>5</sup> (a suggestion which was quite impracticable). By December, the whole area was pacified, and Crawford was asked by the Government to enter upon a revenue settlement of Jhalda immediately.<sup>6</sup> But they did not take into account the violent reaction of the tribal people to the British encroachment on their tribal system by the courts and the military authorities, though the rebels of Tamar, like those of Jhalda, had surrendered only on condition that they should not be

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1. To G.G. & C., 17 Nov. 1782. Home Misc. No.207(2), p.431.
  2. Hunter, Bengal MS. Records, I, No.269. Also See G.G.& C., 20 Nov. 1782, Home Misc. No.207, P.432; Also See Rev. Letter from Bengal, 6 Feb. 1783, Ibid. P.433.
  3. Hunter, Bengal. MS. Records No.403.
  4. Ibid. No.404.
  5. Ibid. No.457.
  6. Ibid. No.459.

delivered over to the faujdari adalat for trial.<sup>1</sup>

It was unlikely, indeed, that Pachet would long remain quiet. The raja felt the encroachment on his independence very sorely, for British rule both curbed his marauding activities in the neighbourhood, and led to an enhancement of the revenue demand, which he found himself unable to meet. The introduction of non-tribal officials and revenue-farmers was also an irritation, and one felt by the raja and people alike. The raja, 'a very extravagant debauch', became heavily involved in debt,<sup>2</sup> while the tribal chieftains found themselves at the mercy of the naib diwan (on the part of the collector), whose removal was twice prevented by the collector. Matters were made worse by the Company's unwise administrative measures. Pachet and its neighbouring estates were placed under the collector of Ramgarh, whose headquarters were 75 Kos (150 miles) distant from Raghunathpur,<sup>3</sup> where the naib diwan of Pachet lived, and who was already overburdened with the affairs of a large and unwieldy district. The collector was not even allowed servants conversant with the local language in which the accounts were kept.<sup>4</sup> No wonder, therefore, that Jhalda was seriously disturbed in 1789-90.<sup>5</sup>

Yet in 1791 a decennial settlement of the estate was

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1. Ibid. No.578.

2. M. Leslie, Ramgarh Collector, to Board, 3 May 1787, Beng. Rev. Cons. 18 March 1789. (<sup>51</sup>/<sub>33</sub>) P.126

3. Leslie to Board, 3 May 1787, Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Hunter, op.cit. No.1613 (Report of the naib diwan of Jhalda).

concluded and in March 1793 / <sup>the</sup> Permanent Settlement was introduced.<sup>1</sup> These settlements brought with them a whole new complex of revenue methods - the issue of pattas, measurement of land (rakababandi) and so on. But as Raja Garur Narain Deo wrote in 1793, such a system was novel and quite unsuited to the locality. "My country abounds in hills and woods, and the villages were never measured; if now I make the measurement the ryots will run away and the villages will be depopulated. A Mahatto [Mahto] takes a Pottah for a village, and then divides the land into 16 parts to the ryots, who cultivate it and pay the revenue yearly to me; there never has been a Ruckbabundy in my country; nor do we know what a Ruckbabundy is".<sup>2</sup>

The Ramgarh collector, although cross at what he believed was pretended ignorance, had to admit that many of the landholders could neither read nor write, and that they kept their accounts by notching a stick or tying knots on a string. "Thus plunged in barbarism", he wrote, "it will be difficult to induce them to comply with the Regulations of Government, and force or compulsion might be of none or

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1. D.G.Manbhum, 196. There were 1280 villages (404 māl or rent-paying, 49 khas khamar or retained in the zamindar's hands, 388 brahmottar, 68 debottar, 2 bhatottar, 2 mahatrans and 180 jagirs held on quit rents called moghuli, talabi or panchaki). (The revenue was fixed at Rs.53,51: W.Dent, to Govt., 4 Sept.1833, Para.30, B.C.1501/58886)
  2. Petition, Enclosure to Ramgarh coll. to Board, 17 Aug.1793 Beng. Rev. Cons. 82 of 27 March 1794 (53): copies of the pattas unwillingly granted by his (14) shikdar and by the zamindar of Jhalda were enclosed.

little avail - a race of uncivilized people inhabiting (though thinly) a large tract of country, interspersed with mountains and almost impregnable woods and fastnesses, are not easily subjugated, and much I fear that should the Board's orders be carried into rigorous execution, and their ancient and favorite [sic] customs set aside, many of them would be alarmed and fly to their strongholds; and tho' they might not engage in the hazard of acts of open rebellion, yet as subjects they might for ever be lost to the state."<sup>1</sup>

The collector also admitted that the pattas recently granted by Pachet, Jhalda and other chiefs did not correspond with the regulations. But such was their aversion to the measurement of lands and such was their inability to meet its expenses that he recommended that they might be exempted from these innovations: "Indeed such is the nature of the district altogether, that ... it ought to be an exception to general rules and orders."<sup>2</sup> He expressed a fear that the tribal cultivators, being even less informed, would flee the country wholesale, with a consequent considerable loss of revenue, should their chiefs be driven to abscond.

The same objections were put forward against the establishment of the patwaris provided by the regulations. In June 1794 the raja wrote, "The villages are scattered amongst mountains and extremely small and pay a very trifling

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1. W. Hunter to Board, 17 Aug. 1793. Para. 3. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para. 4.

revenue; whence then, if Putwarries be established, can they receive a monthly salary and whence can money be collected for this purpose? There has never been an establishment of Putwarries in this District, when you came here, you informed yourself of the condition of the country and of the villages and have beheld the wretched state of the Ryots. The new establishment which has been ordered will impede and injure the cultivation as the Ryots will consider it a burthen upon them."<sup>1</sup> The Jhalda zamindar also made a similar statement.<sup>2</sup> The collector, therefore, recommended "the suspension of the Regulations regarding Patwarries and Pattahs in the Bengal portion of this [Ramgarh] District."<sup>3</sup> The Government, agreeing, passed a regulation in 1794 providing for such an exemption.

Very soon it became apparent that the regulation (Sec.3, Regulation 45 of 1793) with regard to the sale of an estate for failure to pay the revenue was also most unsuitable. In 1795 when the raja fell much behind in his payments it was decided to put up the estate to public auction. Several Bengali Hindus purchased portions of this estate, but the real purchaser was the Government diwan of the district Ram Sundar Mitra.<sup>4</sup>

1. Petition, N.D., Brng. Rev.Cons. 21 of 25 July 1794 (53)

2. Petition, Ibid. (18)

3. Collector to Board, 29 June 1794, Para.5, Beng.Rev.Cons. 21 of 25 July 1794 (53)

4. Ra. Ramgarh spl. Commr. to 1799 (51). 17 Jan. 1799, Paras. 16 to 29, Beng. Rev.Cons. 21 of 25 July 1794 (53). He purchased it in the name of his sons Nilambar, (3) Bhagwati charan, Harishchandra and Bhairo and of his 'stooges' Radhaath Roy, Nilambar Bose, Jonkiram Chatterjee, Bhagwan Banerjee, Raja Lokath, Jagannath Chatterjee and others.

This was a good example of that misuse of official influence by Indian subordinates in the civil service, who, as B.S.Cohn has shown, "were able through illegal means to force lands to be sold for the arrears of revenue, and were able to purchase very profitable estates under fictitious names."<sup>1</sup> Since Ramsundar, who had served as a diwan for more than a decade (1785 to 1798), knew all the legal maneuvers possible under the British system and since he had the patronage of the collector, he could harass the jungle chiefs in any way he liked.<sup>2</sup>

But there was a limit to their patience. Once they felt that the very means of their subsistence, the land, was slipping from their grasp, they rose in rebellion. From October 1797 to October 1798 Pachet and its neighbouring estates were seriously disturbed.<sup>3</sup> All the tribal sardars of the jungle areas with their followers assembled in Pachet and began to coerce the peasants neither to pay revenue nor to cultivate land. By July 1798 the movement had taken the form of a people's war against the outsiders, and the officer commanding the Ramgarh battalion admitted that "the service of Pachete will require the whole battalion even at the

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1. 'The Initial British Impact on India', Journal of Asian Studies, Aug. 1960, p.425.

2. He extorted Rs.39,520-15-3 from the Ramgarh zamindar, Rs.62,300 from the Pachet Raja whom he also made his debtor, and he was instrumental in securing a present of Rs.5,000 to the collector: Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 & 41 to 43 of 20 May 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

3. Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 8 of 10 Nov.1797( $\frac{128}{34}$ ); 15 of 5 July 1798 ( $\frac{128}{37}$ )



proper season."<sup>1</sup> The collector continued to enforce the sale laws for some time longer, but by September 1798, when the tribal rebels had begun to "kill all the Bengalees [the new purchasers and their employees], and disarm and strip the Hindoostanies",<sup>2</sup> his eyes were opened. Welsh, the officer commanding in Pachet, admitted that "the whole district is on the brink of ruin."<sup>3</sup> The revenue Cucheries were sacked, the postal services disrupted, and the tahsildars and others threatened with death.<sup>4</sup>

The Collector of Ramgarh realized that the disturbances were entirely due to the sale of the lands of the raja, "a measure never before resorted to in this district."<sup>5</sup> All the landholders, who feared that they might similarly suffer, had joined the raja. He reported the wide influence of the raja, now proved beyond doubt. "The Estate having been ... about 60 generations in the family and they being connected through marriage with most of the principal inhabitants in Pacheat and its neighbourhood, Singboom, Maunboom, Burraboom, Chatna and Nagpore, his influence is most extensive and which [sic] has enabled him to incite his adherents to throw the

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1. Major D. Marshall to W. Hunter, Ramgarh Magt., 13 July 1798, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 27 July 1798. ( $\frac{128}{38}$ )

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 19 of 12 Oct. 1798. ( $\frac{128}{38}$ ) 37.

3. Lt. T. H. Welsh to Major D. Marshall, 11 Sept. 1798, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 20 of 12 Oct. ( $\frac{128}{38}$ )

4. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 10 to 12 of 12 Oct. 1798. ( $\frac{128}{38}$ )

5. W. Hunter to Board, 26 Sept. 1798, Para. 2, Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 12 Oct. 1798. ( $\frac{53}{58}$ )

country into the present commotions, from an idea that Government will be induced to restore it to him and which they do not hesitate declaring to be their object."<sup>1</sup> He, therefore, recommended some modification in the regulations with regard to the sale of lands.

While the collector was urging Government to reverse their policy the raja had brought serious charges against the collector and against the diwan who had been instrumental in his ruin.<sup>2</sup> The Government took a serious view of the matter, recalled Hunter, transferred the diwan, and deputed David Vanderheyden to enquire into the causes of the disturbances.<sup>3</sup> After a prolonged enquiry, it was proved that the disturbances were solely due to the dispossession of the raja, and that that dispossession was "ascribable to the united effects of fraud, of speculation, of violence, and chicanery, and to the practice of all these vices to the greatest extent that the field admitted of."<sup>4</sup> It was recommended that the general regulations should not have force in Pachet, and that land should not be sold for arrears of revenue.

So much attached were the tribal people to their chief that they had provided all the necessities of life for him and his family while he was dispossessed of his estate, and

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1. Ibid. Para. 3. All the tribal sardars of the area, Gopal Manjhi, Chunik Singh, Mohan Manjhi, Deobhag, Sham sardar and others were fighting for the raja's cause. [Para.5.]

2. Petition, Enclosure, Ibid.

3. Minute, G.G & Resolution, Board of Rev. Beng., Rev. Cons. 3 & 4 of 12 Oct. 1798 (53)

4. Ramgarh, spl. Commr. to Govt., 17 Jan. 1799, Para. 6, Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 20 May 1799 (54)

they considered his restoration "as the remedy for all the evil, which they have lately endured."<sup>1</sup> Every villager whom the Special Commissioner contacted, frankly told him that "there could be no sultanut or regular government in the country until the Rajah was re-established."<sup>2</sup> The same devotion to his cause was shown by the lesser rajas on the western borders of Pachet, "who in the event of the permanent dispossession of Guroor Narain, would probably make a common cause with him in any commotion that arose in the country, and these united with the Jaqueerdars[sic] of Pachete, the greater part of whom are situated in that quarter, would cause endless trouble, expense, and loss of lives, and baffle the efforts of any force that could be sent against them."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in any case of disaffection the tribal jagirdas (later called ghatwals) would no longer prevent the incursion of the bandits from Tamar, Silli, Patkum, Barabhum, Manbhum and Chhatna; the combination of all their forces, coupled with the climate of the area, would lead to the destruction of every corps that might enter that area.

The special Commissioner, in his salutary report, made clear the inexpediency of applying the sale laws for recovery of balances of revenue to any part of the Ramgarh district. He also suggested a redrawing of administrative boundaries so that Pachet, a Bengal mahal, might be attached to Burdwan or

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1. Ibid. Para. 9.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Para.10.

Birbhum, but he also stressed that for an unsophisticated people it was necessary to have some obvious centre of authority near at hand, and he therefore argued that the headquarters of the Ramgarh district should be moved from Chatra to Hazaribargh, 40 miles nearer to Pachet. That would lessen the confusion caused by "a multiplication of authorities amongst a set of people altogether untaught, and little conversant in our forms of administering justice."<sup>1</sup>

The Government adopted the main suggestion, the raja was restored to his patrimony in May 1799,<sup>2</sup> and the diwan, inspite of his representations,<sup>3</sup> lost his purchase money. Pachet and Chhatna were annexed to the Birbhum district.<sup>4</sup> But since the balances of the estate began to accumulate again<sup>5</sup> and the law and order situation deteriorated,<sup>6</sup> it was made a part of the Jungle Mahals district in 1805 with an over-all control by the Birbhum authorities.

The raja, like other jungle zamindars, was put in charge of the local ghatwali police. Initially the authorities were pleased with the result, recording that the administration of law and justice had been "put on a better footing

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1. Ibid. Para. 50.

2. Board to Govt., 24 May 1799, Beng. Rev. Cons. 1 of 21 June 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

3. Petition, N.D., Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 21 June 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

4. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 12 of 19 Sept. 1799 ( $\frac{128}{43}$ ) ; 6 of 10 Oct. 1799. ( $\frac{128}{43}$ )

5. Hunter, Beng. Ms. Records, Nos. 9876 & 10088.

6. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 2 of 21 May 1801. ( $\frac{128}{54}$ ) : Asman Roy, Nean Singh and the other tribal bandit leaders created havoc in the whole area.

than was the case before"<sup>1</sup>. But in 1805 they made a disillusioning discovery: "On a complaint of robbery being preferred to the police officers, and the property being forthcoming, it was restored to the complainant on his paying a sum equal to one third of its computed value. Thus, the zamindar, if not the instigator of theft or robbery, derived profit from the commission of the crime, and the poor sufferer, taught to regard the zamindar with awe, submitted to the extortion, and would not seek redress in the court owing to fear and the evident inconvenience of quitting his home and family."<sup>2</sup>

(The Company authorities need not have been so perturbed by their discovery - it did not represent any particular turpitude in the raja, but a custom found regularly enough under the Mughals). The shift in emphasis was perhaps inevitable in Pachet for the passage of the great Benares road through the estate made necessary the establishment of several police thanas and chattis (police outposts) along its line.

So an exception was made in the zamindari police rules so far as Pachet was concerned, because of its large area<sup>3</sup> and also probably because the raja was suspect. The zamindari police system was replaced by a thana system, the cost of which was provided by the zamindar.<sup>4</sup> By 1831 there were four

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1. N.L.Chatterjee, 'Jungle Mohals' op.cit. "The Judge and Magistrate of Birbhum was to remove his court to the most convenient situation within the limits of Pachete, for at least four months in the year...."
  2. Ibid.
  3. D.G.Manbhum, 61: There were also small military establishments at Jhalda and Raghunathpur.
  4. Ibid.

police thanas, three of which were under the magistrate and the fourth at Kesargarh under the raja.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally enough, the whole body of ghatwals who were entirely responsible for the rural police in other neighbouring parganas but who were ignored here, felt aggrieved and looked forward to the day when they could subvert the new encroachments on their age-old system.

After the death of Garur Narain in 1817, his eldest son Raghunath succeeded to the estate.<sup>2</sup> But this raja soon became an imbecile.<sup>3</sup> The undue hold of his wife and a young Brahman diwan was resented by the raja's brothers and other relations. As the raja got deeply involved in debt, while this family feud was going on, the ground was prepared for the unrest of 1832.

### Kasipur.

This was a Bhumij pargana in Pachet to the east of Bagmundi. The chief in 1832 was Anandlal Singh, the son of Kunwar Satrughna Singh who had received it as a grant from his brother, Raja Garur Narain of Pachet, at a fixed rent. The validity of this grant was later challenged in the diwani

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.30, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 37 of 29 July 1817. (132) ; 16 of 23 Dec. 1817 (133)

4 He was presented an honorary dress and a rifle worth Rs.400.

3. Dent. to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.30, B.C.1501/58886.



adalat and the expenses of this suit involved Anand Lal in serious pecuniary difficulties. This led him in 1832 to join the discontented members of the Pachet raja's family in inviting the Barabhum insurgents.<sup>1</sup> But since he was unpopular among the ghatwals because of his attempts to increase their rents, they remained aloof.

Patkum:-

Patkum in 1833 was described as "a moderate-sized estate of about 300 villages in the western part of the Jungle Mahals District adjoining Tamar ."<sup>2</sup> It was situated astride the Subarnarekha river, above Dhalbhum, and was bounded on the west by the Tamar mountains and separated from Singhbhum, to the south, by a considerable tract of jungle. The rest of the pargana, along the Subarnarekha was open, productive, and well cultivated.

The population was again mainly Bhumij, but with strongly marked influences from the Mundas of Tamar and Chota Nagpur to the west. (Risley even held that they were pure Mundas)<sup>3</sup>. Like their kinsmen in the neighbouring estates, the Patkumias had also enjoyed absolute independence for centuries committing acts of 'social banditry' at their will.

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1. Ibid. Para.29.

2. Ibid. Para.27.

3. Tribes, I, 117. Their titles of course vary. Thus, the Manki in Chota Nagpur becomes matkum in Dhalbhum and mura in Manbhum and sardar in Barabhum. Vide Appendix, Ibid, II, 12.

In 1794 they were described as "a turbulent and ungovernable race of men who, proud in their ideas of independence, and confiding in the strength of their fastnesses," frequently rose in arms against their immediate superior, the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur or against the rival tribal chieftains.<sup>1</sup> Such was their violence that the estate was laid waste, the fields "overgrown with grass from 1 to 4 feet high, and filled with wild beasts."<sup>2</sup> At the behest of their leaders, these Bhumijes were ready to do or die and they did not hesitate to commit the most heinous crimes: "Their inroads are not only marked by robbery and plunder, but by murder, and [in] such a continual state of warfare are these people that a ryot is not to be met unless armed with a matchlock, a bow or a broad sword. Thus accoutred they are always ready to attend the call of their chief, either for defence or attack as circumstances may require or his enmity or passions may lead him."<sup>3</sup>

The raja, the overlord of these tribal people and their chieftains, was a Bhumij by origin, and his family was at one time closely connected with the Barabhum raja's family.<sup>4</sup> But, in course of time, the family was hinduized, the usual stories connecting it with the legendary Emperor Vikramaditya invented, and three names - Vikramaditya, Udayaditya and

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1. W.Hunter to Board, 10 Apl. 1794, Para.3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 30 May 1794 (53)  
(17)
  2. Ibid. Para.4.
  3. Ibid. Para.3.
  4. D.G.Manbhum, 264.

Satrughnaditya - adopted, in rotation, in the family.<sup>1</sup>

After their conversion, the rajas persecuted the local Pators (Bhumij chieftains), who in the late 18th century invited Mahanti Brahmans from Orissa to support them, killed Raja Udayaditya and drove away his son to Saraikela in Singhbhum. There he won over Panchanan Das, a Bhuiya chief, who, with his tribal force, surprised and massacred the Mahantis. As a reward Panchanan got Naro pargana consisting of 16 villages.<sup>2</sup>

Patkum became a British territory after the grant of the diwani. But for some time it was treated as an appanage of the Chota-Nagpur estate.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in 1792 the demand on the Chota-Nagpur chief was suspended because of the loss he had suffered in Patkum due to disturbances.<sup>4</sup>

From the very early days of British rule, the tribesmen resented the British encroachments upon their tribal system. They were found resisting or supporting their brethren of Tamar and Jhalda in rebellion.<sup>5</sup> Nor did their raja welcome the British administrative innovations. Opposing the regulation with regard to the measurement

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1. Sifton, Barahabhum and Patkum Settlement report, Para.17. Also see DG.Manbhum, 269-270; Vikramditya is said to have come to Patkum during his conquest of Bengal, married a Bhumij girl and built Ichagarh, a few tanks and temples etc.

2. Sifton, op.cit. In 1794 Panchanan deposed before the Ramgarh collector about the depredations committed by the insurgents and in 1807 his son helped in the apprehension of Mukundit and got a reward.

3. W.Hunter to Board, 10 Apl. 1794, Para.3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 30 May 1794 (53)  
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4. Hunter, Beng. MS.Records, No.2501.

5. In 1783-84 and again in 1789.

of land, he stated, "Our country is nothing more than woods and mountains, and has never been measured, nor have we any Ruckbabundy, We are even unacquainted with Begahs and Cottahs; we know not what they are. The villages in our Purgunnahs are very much dispersed and we farm them to the Manjees and Mattoos [mahtos or village headsmen] upon Ticka Pattahs. But in these Pottahs no particulars of the quantity (Tydaad) of the lands are mentioned. But they take possession of the village according to its ancient boundaries and having divided it into 16 Raik or share, let them to the ryots and settle with them for the revenue."<sup>1</sup> As much land as could be sown with one 'moory'<sup>2</sup> of seed, would be known as one 'moory' of land, and revenue would be collected on that basis. Naturally enough, people used to so simple a system were frightened by this new and complex method: "We are very apprehensive the Ryots will desert the very hour the measurement is begun."<sup>3</sup>

Again, the introduction of pattas under the Decennial Settlement was similarly disliked by these people who did not know how to write, and whose "accounts are settled, and the revenues received according to the knots on the string."<sup>4</sup>

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1. His joint petition with the neighbouring zamindars, Beng. Rev. Cons. 82 of 27 March 1794 (<sup>53</sup>/<sub>14</sub>)
  2. Ibid: One maund of seed kept in a 'moory' made of straw. [In my own area also the Santhals and the Oraons use this moory].
  3. Ibid.
  4. Deposition, Patkum zamindar, Enclosure, Hunter, Ramgarh collector, to Board, 10 Apl. 1794, Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 30 May 1794. (<sup>53</sup>/<sub>17</sub>)

These legitimate objections were supported by the Ramgarh collector who wrote: "to abolish immemorial custom and usages, which must be the result of the introduction of Pot-tahs, will require much time, labour, and vexation and the confusion which may arise from the inconceivable ignorance and stupidity of the people cannot be foreseen."<sup>1</sup>

The Board of revenue also admitted the impossibility of introducing pattas "and giving currency to the Regulations in general, in the present rude and uncivilized state of the inhabitants of Patcoom". They hoped, however, that these "daring and licentious" people<sup>2</sup> would gradually accept "the general code of Regulations in common with the rest of the natives of the Company's territories."<sup>3</sup> All the same, they asked the magistrate to explain to them the advantages of these measures to reclaim them "from their present disorderly and vicious habits."<sup>4</sup>

At last Regulations 4 of 1794<sup>5</sup> suspended the earlier rules under Regulation 8 of 1793 regarding pattas and patwaris for the Bihar portion of the Ramgarh district which included Patkum. But no attention was paid to the unsuitability of other rules and measures.

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1. Hunter to Board, Ibid. Para.11.

2. Board to Govt., 29 Apl. 1794, Para.2, Beng.Rev.Cons.1 of 30 May 1794 (53/17)

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. Para.3. They recommended that the general regulations should not be enforced there at the moment, and that the tribal people should be appointed police peons.[Para.4]. They also suspended the sale of the estate, See Beng.Rev. Cons. 20 of 25 July 1794 (53/18)

5. Regulations Passed by the G.G.in C. I, 400-401.

Consequently the unrest among the tribal masses continued to grow. From 1792 to 1807 the unrest was intensified by a struggle for succession to the throne, in which the village and circle leaders - the mundas and mankis - not only of Patkum, but also of the neighbouring estates soon became involved as partisans.<sup>1</sup>

The tribal insurgents even hated the zamindar who had concluded the Decennial Settlement with the Government, as "merely an officer of Government," who could not challenge their "proprietary and indefeasible right" in the land.<sup>2</sup> Indeed they showed a peculiar disdain towards the British authorities. Gajraj Singh and his supporters threatened the peons of the collector with the loss of their life: "Considering the insolence in serving them with a summons they might deem themselves extremely fortunate in being permitted to depart alive, but if they or any others dared to return on such a message they might be sure of leaving their heads with the summons."<sup>3</sup>

The result of this continued unrest was the ruin of the peaceful peasants. According to a report of 1794 "in

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1. Gajraj Singh, one of the claimants in 1792-93 was helped by Madan Munda, Bayar Singh and others (Beng. Rev. Cons. 14 of 29 March 1793 ( $\frac{53}{1}$ )) and later Mukunditya, another pretender, by Bishun Manki of Tamar and several others: Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 25 July 1799 ( $\frac{128}{42}$ ); Beng. Rev. Cons. 44 of 21 June ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )
  2. Hunter to Board, 10 Apl. 1794. Para. 8. Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 30 May 1794. ( $\frac{53}{17}$ )
  3. Ibid.



every direction Patcoom presents to your view villages ruined and lands laid waste by the violence and destructive incursions of Guzeraje Sing, the Mankies and their followers."<sup>1</sup>

It was in such a state of things that the estate was permanently settled in 1798 at a quit-rent of Rs. 885.<sup>2</sup> But nothing was done to solve the internal problems of the estate. The British authorities recognised a minor as the raja, and they ignored the claim of Mukunditya the brother of the late Raja Satrughnaditya. Consequently they had always to support the minor zamindar by troops.<sup>3</sup> British troops<sup>4</sup> hunted down the tribal rebels year after year, and yet Mukunditya (like Lachhuman Singh and later Madhava Singh in Barabhum in the same period) with the help of the tribal chieftains, loomed large on the Patkum horizon till 1807 when he was seized and hanged.

Naturally enough, the estate was deserted and desolated as a result of these commotions. A report of 1808 said, "The Pergunnah of Pautcoom for a series of years past, has experienced scarcely any interval of freedom from the outrages of the late Mokindeet [sic] and his adherents... the late disturbances caused by Ducanny Sahye and Mokendeet have

1. Ibid. Para.3

2. Sifton, op.cit. Para.14: The gross income of the zamindar from 218 villages was Rs.10,457, out of which Rs.4,088 was remitted for debottar (religious grants) brahmottar (grants to Brahmans), chakran (grants to servants etc.) and khorphosh (maintenance grants to the raja's relations.)

3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 44 of 21 June 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

4. Beng. Cr.Judl.Cons. 16 of 25 July 1799 ( $\frac{128}{42}$ ) ; 18 of 29 Aug. 1799 ( $\frac{128}{42}$ )

deprived him [the raja] of the small resources that remained, the inhabitants of the country, after having been plundered of their cattle and property and having seen their villages burnt and destroyed, have sought protection with their families in other estates, and the zemindar himself incumbered with private debts incurred in the payment of his revenues,...., was even distressed for the means of providing daily subsistence for his family and dependants."<sup>1</sup>

This estate had remained a part of the large and unwieldy district of Ramgarh until the end of the 18th century, and then of the Birbhum district till 1805 when it became a part of the Jungle Mahals, and the new rules regarding ghatwali police were applied here. But the raja's financial difficulties resulting in the accumulation of balances still obstructed any improvement. In spite of several remissions<sup>2</sup> the raja again fell into arrears in 1813.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the greatest curse of the estate was the long minority of the rajas, which continued until 1832. It was in this period that the ghatwali tenures and the maintenance grants increased tremendously at the cost of the resources of the zamindar. In 1816 the list of ghatwals showed them as

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1. W. Blunt, J.M. Magt., to Govt., 28 June 1808., Para. 2, Beng. Rev. Cons. 21 of 1 July 1808  $(\frac{55}{13})$
  2. Beng. Rev. Cons. 7 of 29 Apr. 1808  $(\frac{55}{11})$  and 22 of 1 July 1808  $(\frac{55}{13})$
  3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 15 of 14 May 1813  $(\frac{56}{4})$

holding only  $15\frac{3}{4}$  maunds of land - that is to say 126 bighas, one maund of seed being taken as sufficient to sow eight bighas - as reward for their police services. But in five subsequent lists, prepared between 1816 and 1832, the grants to the ghatwals can be seen rising to 400 bighas (50 maunds) in 18 villages and 1,420 bighas ( $177\frac{1}{2}$  maunds) in 189 villages.<sup>1</sup> Besides this increase in ghatwali tenures, a large portion of the zamindar's lands came in the hands of the khorphoshdars (maintenance grantees). The raja was left with very limited resources, upon which the Government demands pressed heavily. To improve matters, the sazawal of the court of wards enhanced the rents of the khorphoshdars and of the other tribal chieftains who had always been paying quit-rents. But this created discontent among them.<sup>2</sup>

It was also in this period that the non-tribal money-lenders got a foothold in this estate, soon to become obnoxious to the people. Lastly, the establishment of an official police station early in 1832 created discontent among the ghatwals. All these factors contributed to the developments of 1832.

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1. Sifton, op.cit. Para. 19.

2. Dent, to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 27, B.C.1501/58886.

Bagamundi:-

This estate had Patkum on its western and southern boundaries, and its southern limits also touched Barabhum over a short distance. To the east and north it was hemmed in by an extensive range of hills; on the west it had the Subarnarekha as its boundary. Along the river valley the country was open, flat, well-cultivated and productive, elsewhere there was much jungle, famous for lac.<sup>1</sup>

This estate had been formerly a dependency of Pachet, forming with Jhalda, Hasla and Bagankodar, "a line of defensive posts against the Rajas of Chota Nagpoor and Ramghur whose countries are immediately to the west and north of them."<sup>2</sup>

The population was chiefly Bhumij. Like their kinsmen in the neighbouring estates, they were also of an independent disposition, and opposed the British encroachments on their tribal system tooth and nail. In 1793 they opposed the introduction of pattas and the measurement of land because these measures were too complex for them.<sup>3</sup> In 1798-99 they opposed the sale of the estate in lieu of revenue arrears, a sale engineered here, as in Pachet, by Diwan Ram Sundar Mitra. On the latter occasion, they became so violent that British

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1. Ibid. Para.28.

2. Ibid.

3. Joint petition, Raja Mahadeo Singh and others, Beng. Rev. Cons. 82 of 27 March 1794 (53/14)

troops were employed against them for several months.<sup>1</sup>

On both occasions the authorities had to yield. By Regulation 4 of 1794 the estate was exempted from the rule regarding the issue of pattas, while in 1799 the Special Commissioner for Ramgarh noted, "The general objection to the sale of Estates in the District of Ramghur cannot in any instance apply more forcibly than in the present if the remote situation of the lands, their inaccessibility, the unhealthiness of the climate, and the small amount of the revenue be considered."<sup>2</sup>

It became clear that the people of Bagmundi would never allow any non-tribal adventurer to succeed to the position of their chief by the mere purchase at auction of the raja's estate. The special Commissioner argued, in terms of expediency, against the selling up of Raja Anand Singh, pointing out that "circumstances may greatly alter the nature and motives of such acts [as the raja's rebellion], and that when from such causes as must prevail in a rude, mountainous and frontier country even the most salutary orders of Government cannot always be so regularly enforced as might be desired, or where the object in view is not worthy of the effort necessary to enforce the accomplishment of it, the failure of occasional attempts at force, with adequate means, will invariably tend to lessen the respect for the

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 11 & 12 of 4 May 1798 ( $\frac{128}{37}$ ); 5 & 6 of 11 May 1798 ( $\frac{128}{37}$ ) 33 of 10 Aug. 1738 ( $\frac{128}{37}$ )
  2. Ramgarh spl. Commr. to Govt., 9 Feb. 1799, Para. 2, Beng. Rev. Cons. 49 of 20 May 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

constituted authorities, whilst a moderate spirit of conciliation, governed by a consideration of the circumstances and habits of the people to be controuled [sic], will as necessarily tend to increase it."<sup>1</sup> When Government came to investigate the way in which Diwan Ram Sundar Mitra had provoked the sale - and then had himself "purchased the estate in another name", they found justice allied to expediency, and restored the estate to the raja.<sup>2</sup>

This estate was first a part of the Ramgarh district and then of Birbhum till 1805 when it was transferred to the Jungle Mahals. But this change, with new police rules, did not improve the condition of the people. Both the raja and the mankis became involved in debt and their lands were mostly mortgaged.<sup>3</sup> The Government jama was Rs. 2,266, and the estimated assets Rs. 6,500, though "in this as in all the other Jungle Mahals the resources of the estate are greatly absorbed in providing for the younger branches of the family."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid. Para. 11.

2. Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 25 March 1799 (<sup>54</sup>/<sub>I</sub>). Rajkumar, Natbar Singh and others were the fake purchasers: Beng. Rev. Cons. 27 of 5 Oct. 1798 (<sup>53</sup>/<sub>58</sub>).

3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 28, B.C. 1501/58886.

4. Ibid. Mahta (Matha), an estate of 19 villages and about 20 sq. miles, was a part of Bag mundi till 1805, when it was recognised as a separate zamindari. Thakur Bayar Singh, its jagirdar, was a notorious chuar in 1798-99.

Manbhum:-

This was a large estate, open and cultivated, to the east of Barabhum. Manbazar, a large village, later became the headquarters of the Manbhum division in 1834.<sup>1</sup> Its chief had been hinduised in course of time, and the family had begun to claim that they came originally from Rajputana. But in the absence of any authentic proof, the Manbhum Gazetteer argues that "in all probability like other zamindars of the district, they are actually of Bhumij or possibly in this case of Bāuri origin."<sup>2</sup>

From 1805 this estate was a part of the Jungle Mahals district, and the police power was vested in the raja, aided by an extensive establishment of ghatwals. The Government jama was Rs.1,595, while the mufassil assets, according to the raja's statement in the court, Rs.16,000.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1820's there was a serious family feud, and the raja was compelled by the civil court to give separate maintenance grants to his brothers. He was also hostile to his eldest son born of his first wife. Moreover, he was deeply involved in serious financial difficulties because of his improvident expenditure.

When in 1832 disturbances broke out in Barabhum conditions were ripe for their spread to Manbhum whose raja was related to Ganga Narain, one of the noted leaders of the

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1. D.G.Manbhum, 276, incorrectly says that this was the headquarters of the Jungle Mahals District.

2. Ibid. 276.

3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.31, B.C.1501/58886.



rebellion.

Ambikanagar:-

The main part of this estate lay to the east of Manbhum, but a small portion bordered the south-eastern angle of Barabhum. Generally speaking the land was open and well-cultivated, lying on the south bank of the Kasai river.

Politically it formed part of the zamindari called Khuttura Dhalbhum (to distinguish it from Ghatshila Dhalbhum) and had itself been originally called Dhalbhum.<sup>1</sup>

During the early days of the British rule the zamindar of this estate was considered to be defiant and its people turbulent.<sup>2</sup> That was why it was several times transferred from one district to the other for the sake of effective control. In the early 19th century several rajas died very young, and on the eve of the 1832-33 unrest the raja was an idiot and the estate was under the court of wards in trust during the minority of the imbecile's son.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid. Para. 32. Koilapal was formerly under this estate: Firminger, Midnapur Dist, Records. IV, No.71.
  2. Ibid. Nos. 2 & 70.
  3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.32, B.C.1501/58886.

Koilapal:-

Koilapal was a small estate (jagir) consisting of a jungly tract adjoining the Dhadka ghat of Barabhum.<sup>1</sup>

The inhabitants were all Bhumijes. They were always ready to go on marauding expeditions at the orders of their chief who was a noted cattle-lifter in the early days of British rule.<sup>2</sup> In 1783-84 this estate was in recurrent unrest. In 1784 the chief, Sanpal Singh, was captured with all his family, and for some time was held in jail.<sup>3</sup> Later, when he was released by the Magistrate of Midnapur,<sup>4</sup> he asked for some means of subsistence, and he was allowed to have one head of cattle per day, in turn, from every zamindar of the area. Later the zamindars made terms with him by granting him a few villages for his maintenance in return for his promising to spare their villages.<sup>5</sup>

Bir Singh, the son of Sanpal, stepped into the shoes of his father, and from 1798 to 1809 he was the Rob Roy of the area.<sup>6</sup> In 1809 a reward of Rs.500 was offered for his arrest.<sup>7</sup>

1. Ibid. Para. 33. There were only five villages in it.

2. For Subla Singh See p.26 of this chapter.

3. Hunter, Beng. MS. Records, Nos.677 and 678.

4. Ibid.

5. Gokhale, op.cit. Para.203. The name here is Shab Lal.

6. In 1799 he had 500 chuar followers, and his associates were Lal Singh of Suri, Punj-Sardar of Chelyama, Goman Gunjan of Dhadka (all three in Barabhum), Baijnath Singh of Dampara (Dhalbhum), Bindaban Bhuiya of Kursal (Sham-sundarpur) and Baijnath Singh Bhuiya of Jamda (Raipur): Beng. Rev. Cons. 14 of 14 March 1800 ( $\frac{54}{10}$ ) and 20 of 3 May 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )

7. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 21 of 15 Dec. 1809 ( $\frac{130}{9}$ )

Blunt, the Jungle Mahals Magistrate, admitted that it was out of his power to adopt "decided measures" against him without a much more adequate force than he then had.<sup>1</sup>

At long last in January 1810 Bir Singh surrendered.<sup>2</sup> Since he helped in the apprehension of his old colleague Baijnath Singh of Dampara,<sup>3</sup> he was pardoned, and the estate was left in his possession.

Bahadur Singh, like his father, at first took a leading part in the disturbances in 1832, and then he surrendered and helped the authorities.<sup>4</sup>

#### Shamsundarpur and Phulkuṣmā:-

These two estates were the two parts of the former estate of Tungbhum, which had been divided among the heirs long before Regulation X of 1800, prohibiting such divisions, was promulgated. The north-western part of it, adjoining Koilapal and Dampara, was full of jungle, but the south-western portion was open and cultivated.<sup>5</sup> To the east of these estates were Raipur, Bhellaidihi and Simlapal, to the north Supur and Chhatna, all considerable in size and

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1. Ibid.

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 39 of 19 Jan. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{11}$ )

3. Ibid.

4. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.33, B.C.1501/58886.

5. Ibid. Para. 34.

formerly dependencies of Pachet.

From the very early days of British penetration into this area, these zamindars had opposed any encroachment on their age old independence, and for that reason these estates were transferred and retransferred to Midnapur and Burdwan several times during the last quarter of the 18th century. Yet Sundar Narain, the zamindar of Shamsundarpur, and Durp Narain of Phulkusmā committed depredations several times during this period.<sup>1</sup> In 1799, the year of the great chuar rebellion in this area, they helped the dispossessed Rani of the Midnapur estate and Durjan Singh of Raipur with their arms and men.<sup>2</sup> Again, in 1809 they were found harbouring the chuars and instigating depredations.<sup>3</sup>

The constitution of the new district of the Jungle Mahals with new rules regarding the tribal police, did not restore order in the two estates. As the zamindars, who paid Rs.2 65 and Rs.210 revenue, from estimated collections of Rs.4,000 and 3,600 respectively, had granted much of their lands to their dependent relatives and to the ghatwals, their resources were never large. In the early 19th century both zamindars got themselves heavily involved in debt to non-tribal moneylenders and were forced to alienate still more of their lands in payment. By 1832 their only way of

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1. cf. In 1783-84: Hunter, Beng. MS. Records Nos. 539, 1933. Also in the period 1767 to 1772 they had been noted marauders,

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 11 July 1799 ( $\frac{128}{42}$ )

3. Jungle Mahals Magt. to Midnapur Magt., 14 Sept. 1809. Para. 5. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 21 of 15 Dec. 1809 ( $\frac{130}{9}$ )

escape seemed to them to be to raise a revolt and to wipe out the moneylenders.<sup>1</sup>

### Raipur:-

This estate on the banks of the Kasai and to the east of Manbhum and Phulkusmā, was one of the most disturbed jungle estates of Midnapur in the later part of the 18th century. The village of Raipur was situated on the southern bank of the Kasai, 36 miles south of Bankura.<sup>2</sup> The people were Bhumijs. The chief, after his hinduization, declared himself a Rajput.

After its subjugation by the British, Raipur formed part of the Nadia district, but in March 1794 it was transferred to Burdwan.<sup>3</sup> Then in September of that year it was transferred to Midnapur district.<sup>4</sup> Next year this estate was sold in liquidation of arrears of Rs.3,145,<sup>5</sup> whereupon widespread disturbances began.<sup>6</sup> Durjan Singh, the ousted zamindar, was suspected of having instigated them. In 1798 he voluntarily made his appearance before the Magistrate of Midnapur and denied the

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.34, B.C.1501/58886.

2. D.G.Bankura, 172.

3. Beng. Rev.Cons. 35 of 27 March 1794 ( $\frac{53}{14}$ )

4. Beng. Cr.Judl.Cons. 1 of 3 Oct. 1794 ( $\frac{128}{15}$ )

5. West Beng. Dist.Records, Burdwan, 212-213: The question of the irregularity of the sale procedure was raised.

6. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 5 of 7 July 1797 ( $\frac{128}{33}$ )

charge. Since there was no evidence against him, he was set free on giving a security.<sup>1</sup> Still the estate remained disturbed till 1799. At one time a body of 1500 chuars set fire to the bazar and cutcheri, and overran the whole tract.<sup>2</sup> Bodies of troops conducted operations in the area, but to no effect.<sup>3</sup>

At last in March 1799 the Collector of Midnapur, while recommending separate rules for the jungle zamindars and their ryots "who are almost savages," wrote that "their lands also should never be sold to realize the revenue as it only creates disturbances and greater loss to Government... Roy-pore which is happily the only Estate which has been sold in the jungles [of the Midnapur district] is a striking proof of what I have asserted and ... it would be far more preferable to compromise the business with the former zamindar, than dispute it, as the purchaser ... will never be able to keep possession unless a company of seapoys are constantly stationed in the pergunnah."<sup>4</sup> Even if the outsider got possession, he went on, "which is supposing that which never will be, the Ryotts will not cultivate the land as Doorjun Sing the former proprietor has forbidden them."

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 1 June 1798 ( $\frac{132}{37}$ ) . But D.G.Bankura, 38, notes that "he was apparently once captured after he had attacked, plundered and burnt some 30 villages; but when he was put on trial he had to be released because no one dared to appear against him."
  2. D.G.Bankura, 37.
  3. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 15 of 10 Aug. 1798 ( $\frac{128}{37}$ ) ; Beng. Rev. Cons. 18 of 22 Feb. 1799 ( $\frac{53}{60}$ )
  4. Imhoff to Board, 4 March 1799, Beng. Rev. Cons. 33 of 15 March 1799 ( $\frac{54}{1}$ )

In fact, Durjan Singh, with the help of the retainers of almost all the neighbouring zamindars, felt secure in his fort at Jamda, while the whole estate was deserted and lay waste.<sup>1</sup> So the Midnapur collector requested the Government to suspend the rules with regard to the sale of estates so far as this area was concerned.<sup>2</sup> Hira Lal, the purchaser of the estate, had never got any foothold in the estate, while his servants were murdered as soon as they entered it.<sup>3</sup>

Though late in 1800, with the adoption of new rules regarding the police, the situation changed and the ghatwals of other estates became quiet, it was still thought best to rescind the sale of Raipur. Fatch Singh, the eldest son of the old and infirm Durjan Singh, was installed as zamindar of the estate with police powers and an enhanced jama (of Rs.3,500).<sup>4</sup>

Under the new district of the Jungle Mahals since 1805, this estate remained quiet for some time. But by 1809 the tribal sardars of Raipur had become restive. The zamindar, it was believed, was instigating them.<sup>5</sup>

However, when in January 1810, Baijanath Singh, the bandit chief of Jamda in Raipur, was apprehended,<sup>6</sup> the main

1. Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 3 May 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ ) ; Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 25 of 20 May 1799. ( $\frac{128}{41}$ )

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 11 of 22 Aug. 1799. ( $\frac{128}{42}$ )

3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 14 of 14 March 1800 ( $\frac{54}{10}$ )

4. Beng. Rev. Cons. 1 & 2 of 16 Oct. 1800 ( $\frac{54}{13}$ ) ; Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 12 of 26 Feb. 1801. ( $\frac{128}{52}$ )

5. Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 21 of 15 Dec. 1809 ( $\frac{130}{9}$ )

6. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 38 of 19 Jan. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{11}$ )



reason for the late unrest was found to be the defective state of the police, and the financial stringency of the zamindar.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, his land-revenue had been increased from Rs.2,400 (in 1174 fasli or 1767A.D.) to Rs.2,509 (in 1199 fasli or 1792 A.D.) and then to Rs.3,509 in 1800-1801. At the recommendation of the Jungle Mahals Magistrate, the Government then restored the former jama of Rs.2,509.<sup>2</sup> From that point on the estate remained quiet until 1831.

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 5 of 13 Apl. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{14}$ )  
 2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 13 Apl. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{14}$ )

## CHAPTER II.

Chota-Nagpur, Palamau and Singhbhum  
in the Early British Period.

The second region with which we are concerned, is Chota-Nagpur proper, with its ancient gateway, Palamau. Chota-Nagpur is a high, rolling, well-wooded tableland, in parts very fertile, and well peopled. Palamau, to the west and north of Chota-Nagpur, consists of the lower spurs of the Chota-Nagpur-Hazaribagh plateau, where it borders them, and further west still of "a tangled mass of isolated peaks and long irregular stretches of broken hills."<sup>1</sup> The valleys of two rivers, the North Koel and the Amanat, which run northward to join the Son, provide the only level stretches of any great extent, and the main lines of approach. For convenience sake Palamau will be discussed first.

With Japla, Belaunja and Tori, Palamau district was 65 miles in length<sup>2</sup> and nearly 5,000 square miles in area,<sup>3</sup> most of it involved hill ranges, often of sharp and irregular outline, rising at their highest to some 3,000 feet. Hunter said of Palamau, "The face of the country is wilder and more broken by rock and jungle than in Chutiá Nágpur."<sup>4</sup> Its south-

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1. W.W.Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, XVI, 234.

2. W.Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, 359.

3. D.E.Sunder, Palamau Settlement Report, Paras. 1 and 3. From 1771 to 1833 Palamau was a part of the Ramgarh district, and Tori was a dependency of the Chota-Nagpur estate. Palamau proper was 100 miles long and forty broad: Cuthbert to Govt., 15 Apl.1830, Para.50, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 27 of 11 May 1830. (<sup>139</sup>/<sub>51</sub>)

4. Hunter, op.cit.234.

western corner, the Chechari valley, is an almost complete basin, but for the narrow outlet carved by the river on its way north. "On the south it is overlooked by the range of hills in parganá Barwá; on the west the Jamirá pát, a high plateau in the tributary Mahal of Sargújá, rises like a wall to a height of nearly 4,000 feet, confronted on the eastern side of the valley by the Nethur-hát pát, of 3,600 feet; while a lofty spur from the Jamirá Pát, crowned by the natural fortress of Támolegarh, overhangs the valley to the north."<sup>1</sup>

The forests, hills and rivers, admired as grand and beautiful scenery, provided security and seclusion for the tribal inhabitants of Palamau, for the approaches were covered by "many ghauts or passes of various degrees of strength."<sup>2</sup> The Kharwars and Cheros, the principal tribes, were always a powerful people, and as late as the 16th century were described as "a race of border robbers, chiefly known by the daring raids which they made into the open country at the foot of the hills."<sup>3</sup> None of the invasions of Palamau, whether that of Sher Shah's generals in 1538, or of the Mughals<sup>4</sup> or of the Marathas in the 18th century ever thoroughly subjugated it.

Nevertheless the tribals were not immune to outside influences, and the process of hinduization was well under

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1. Ibid. 236-237.

2. Ibid.

3. D.G.Palamau, 18.

4. Hunter, op.cit. 455-468. Also see D.G.Palamau, 18.

way by the 16th century. The Chero chiefs in other areas of south Bihar, where they were found ruling till that century, erected numbers of temples. From south Bihar the process spread into Palamau to the landowning Cheros there. They borrowed Brahmanical gotras in support of their claims to Rajput status, and by the close of the 19th century, the Palamau Cheros were wearing the sacred thread.<sup>1</sup>

Their right to wear it was dubious, for their origin was almost certainly non-Aryan. The anthropologists - Dalton, Risley, Henry Elliot - agree in believing them to be the kinsmen of the Mundas and Oraons: 'convincing proof of the non-Aryan affinities of the cheros is derived from the fact that the Chota-Nagpur members of the caste [i.e. those of Palamau], whose poverty and social insignificance have held them aloof from Hinduising influences, still retain totemistic section-names similar to those in use among the Kharia's, who are beyond doubt closely akin to the Mundas."<sup>2</sup>

There is some doubt as to how far the Cheros and Kharwars had intermingled. Risley held that the Cheros, sacred-thread wearers, living strictly as Rajputs, had intermarried with Kharwar families. Sunder and others held that the two tribes maintained their separate identity. Thus the Bhogtas, themselves a sub-tribe of the Kharwars, while admitting that the Cheros are a sub-tribe of the Bhogtas, refuse to eat with

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1. Risley, Tribes. I, 199. Also see Dalton, Ethnology, 127.

2. Risley, op.cit. 199: Two sub-tribes of the Cheros are Barahajaria & Terah-hajaria.

them or to accept them as social equals. Nevertheless, despite their Dravidian origin, both Cheros and Kharwars, by their martial habits and pride, fully lived up to the Kshatriya status they claimed. According to Forbes, "the Cheros are a proud race, and exceedingly jealous of their national honour. They have never forgotten that they were once a great people, and that their descent was an honourable one."<sup>1</sup>

Palamau, as part of the Bihar Subah, passed under British administration with the rest of the province, by the grant of the Diwani in 1765. But if Palamau was not "the absolute terra incognita that further Chota Nagpore so long remained"<sup>2</sup>, the difficulty of the terrain, and the reputation of the inhabitants were sufficiently discouraging to the Company. Not until a civil war broke out among the Cheros in 1770 did Captain Jacob Camac, the commander of the southern frontier detachment, think fit to enter the country. Even then he marched only after one of the claimants to the Palamau estate had negotiated with the Patna Council for aid.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1771, Camac attacked Palamau in support of the claimant's forces and by June the insurgents, who had occupied the Palamau fort, had been defeated. However, the resistance of the Bhogtas and other tribes had been so stiff that it was thought necessary to occupy the fort,<sup>4</sup> and two

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1. Ibid. 203.

2. Bradley-Birt, Chota Nagpore, 205.

3. Bridge, Palamau Settlement report, Para.41.

4. The light guns of Camac at first made 'no impression on the solid stone of the forts': Hunter, op.cit. 469.

other outposts on the Sarguja border with Company troops so as to ensure effective control of the territory. The candidate supported by the Company, one Gopal Rai was then installed as the raja, on a promise of Rs.12,000 revenue a year to the East India Company. Even then the precarious nature of the British control was emphasised by insurrections which broke out soon after Camac had returned to Patna. (Camac fell ill after his return and rumours spread that he was dead).<sup>1</sup> The combined efforts of the Company's forces were required to save the fort and to defeat and drive off the Chero claimant Jai Nath Singh and the Marathas who had come to his support.<sup>2</sup>

Further risings in 1773, though suppressed, emphasised the power of the southern chiefs, whom "it was deemed expedient to conciliate".<sup>3</sup> In October Warren Hastings decided to transfer Palamau (with Ramgarh and Chota-Nagpur) from the charge of the Patna Council to that of the Presidency, and to entrust both revenue collection and the administration of justice to the zamindars. In 1774 conciliation was carried a stage further by a remission of Rs.6,800 in the Palamau demand, on account of severe floods.<sup>4</sup>

In 1781 civil and criminal courts were established at Chatra, the officer in charge of them also being responsible for supervising the collection of revenue. But the centre for

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1. J.C. Jha, 'Early British penetration into Chota Nagpur, 1769-73'. J.B.R.S. XLIII, 331.

2. Bridge, op.cit. Para.42.

3. Ibid. Para.43.

4. Ibid.

Camac's south-western frontier detachment - later the Ramgarh battalion - was Hazaribagh. In 1799 the Ramgarh magistrate strongly opposed the proposal of shifting the sadr station from Chatra to Hazaribagh because of "the necessity of watching closely the people of Palamow, a more hardy and bolder race of men than the other inhabitants of this district."<sup>1</sup> Despite the establishment of the courts, and the abolition of the posts of thanadar and faujdar in this pargana, however, the zamindar was allowed to retain many concurrent powers, while the faujdari darogas reported independently of the adalat through the Remembrancer of the criminal courts to the Governor-General.<sup>2</sup>

The policy of indirect rule through the raja or the zamindar - for such in effect was the system followed by the Company in Palamau - depended for its success upon the quality of the chiefs. Gopal Rai, however, proved an unfortunate choice. Himself hinduised, he was at odds with his tribal chieftains, whose jagirs he sought to resume, and with the representative of the Company, the qanungo Udwant Ram. There followed, inevitably, "a series of iniquities which probably have no parallel in the whole revenue history of the Company's provinces,"<sup>3</sup> and which ended with the treacherous and brutal murder of Udwant Ram by the raja, and the latter's trial in

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1. T. Palmer to Govt., 17 Aug. 1799, Para. 3, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 30 of 29 Aug. 1799 (128/42)

2. Bridge, op.cit. Para. 44.

3. Ibid. Para. 45.



1776 and life-imprisonment at Patna.<sup>1</sup>

Gopal Rai had come increasingly under the influence of Shiva Prasad Singh, a nephew of that Jai Nath Singh expelled from Palamau by Camac, and the estate was torn by the factional struggles of the supporters and opponents of Shiva Prasad Singh. During those struggles British troops had several times to be sent into Palamau to restore order. Yet, though Shiva Prasad appeared to be implicated in the death of Gopal Rai's father Raja Jai Kishan, it was to him that the guardianship of Gopal Rai's son, Churaman Rai was given in 1786 (the year in which Gopal Rai died in Patna prison). That position he retained even after he had been proved to be the instigator of disturbances between 1800 and 1803. The Company's policy was one of pure expediency: Bridge, the settlement officer, rightly called it a "hand to mouth policy."<sup>2</sup> Shiva Prasad used his position to further his own factional interest and to destroy that of his ward. "Such was the man to whom was delivered the administration of the estate, and the care of the minor grandson of Jai Kishan, his foe. It is perhaps not to be wondered at, that the Thakurais [the jagirdars] recovered all their lost property and added to it, while Churaman Rai grew up neglected and incompetent, the owner of a smaller property than many of his own principal under-tenure-holders."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Capt. E. Roughsedge to Govt., 6 March 1814, Para. 14, Beng. Rev. Cons. 15 of 2 April 1814: (56)  
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<sup>2</sup> Bridge, op.cit. Para. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The destruction of the raja's estate thus begun by his guardian was completed by the Company's Decennial Settlement. Sheristadar John Grant in 1787 had classed Palamau with Cooch Bihar, Chota-Nagpur and Ramgarh as a zamindari of the second class, that is a chieftainship the exact territory and revenue of which could not be ascertained because it was so hilly and so covered with jungle.<sup>1</sup> But though the Government had decided in 1789 that the settlement of this pargana would "continue as at present",<sup>2</sup> Leslie, the Ramgarh collector, who from 1789 onwards made the Decennial Settlement, proceeded to make detailed awards which ignored any doubts and difficulties. Certain of the old jagirdars were allowed by Leslie to pay their revenue through the raja, but he also confirmed many new men in estates which had been acquired in the most dubious ways. Thus Sugand Rai, who had long been refractory, was confirmed in Deogan which he had recently acquired in a doubtful way; Chhatrapati Rai, whose father Gajraj Rai was still in jail, was confirmed in Bisrampur, while his brother Dharni Rai was confirmed in Baraon jagir; even Ram Baksha Singh, the son of the defeated Jai-Nath, was confirmed in the tenure of all the land that he could lay his hands on.<sup>3</sup>

The result of Leslie's settlement was an abrupt fall

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1. J. Grant, Chief Sheristadar, to Board of Revenue, 8 March 1787, Beng. Rev. Cons. 18 March 1789 (51/33) P.355.
  2. Resolution, G.G.in C., 18 Sept. 1789, Para.38, Beng. Rev. Cons. 41 of 2 Jan. 1824 (59/61).
  3. Bridge, op.cit. Para.49.

in the income of the raja and in his prestige vis-a-vis his jagirdars. Most of the district officers over-estimated the raja's income and quite failed to realise that after meeting the cost of the police and the revenue collections he was left with very little. It was only long afterwards that it was realised that as a matter of fact he never succeeded in collecting the greater part of the koa [tussore silk worm cocoons] and kath [catechu] charges at all, nor most of the contributions from the tribes, as "they never would agree to pay it."<sup>1</sup>

In 1793 Raja Churaman Rai came of age. His position was already gravely impaired by the Decennial Settlement, and by the commutation of the rents payable by seven under-tenure holders which had been arranged by Shiva Prasad Singh. (Shiva Prasad, as a jagirdar, took good care not to commute the services and dues payable by others to himself and his fellow jagirdars.) There had also been practised upon the raja more outright frauds. Captain Roughsedge noted in 1814 that "as the Dewan and all the head servants of the Raja were themselves the principal jageerdars, their interest was at variance with their duty, and each took advantage of the youth and incapacity of the Rajah, to reduce the rent of his own lands, and increase their extent, whenever feasible, by placing on the list of jageers, villages that were held at

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1. Roughsedge to Govt., 6 March 1814, Para.8, Beng. Rev.  
 Cons.15 of 2 Apl. 1814 (56)  
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will."<sup>1</sup> The raja, with his assets thus filched or unwisely capitalised by his guardian, found it impossible to meet government demands from his ordinary income,<sup>2</sup> and even after coming of age, had to continue the bankrupt policy of commuting rents for lump sum payments. By 1812 his annual income had sunk by some Rs.2,564, and when on three occasions he did resume jagirs, the collector or the courts compelled him to restore them. His only remaining remedy was to put pressure upon the body of tribal cultivators, and to resume their lands - and from 1789 that process was steadily tried.

The result of this shifting of the burden from the strong to the weak was a growth of general discontent. This flared up in 1800 in a revolt which needed the employment of two battalions of company troops and of the forces of Raja Fateh Narain Singh of Deo to cope with it.<sup>3</sup> The situation was complicated by "the intimate and immediate local connexion of Palamow with the Maratha frontiers",<sup>4</sup> and not until 1802 were the last embers of revolt stamped out.

One feature of the unrest was that the insurgents also turned against Shiva Prasad Singh, who, as diwan, had ruined many of them, attacking his house at Ranka, and showed their hatred of the collector's sazawal, too. At one time in February 1801 as many as twelve to fifteen hundred armed Cheros,

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1. Ibid. Para.14.

2. To make matters worse, in 1795 the raja had to pay Rs.5,000 to the Govt. as an investiture-fee: Ramgarh collector to Board, 23 June 1795, Hunter, Bengal MS.Records. No.4855.

3. Bengal Cr.Judl. Cons. 8 of 26 Feb. 1801 (128)  
53.

4. Ibid.

with auxiliaries from Sarguja, Chota-Nagpur and Tamar, armed to the teeth, were in the field against the oppressors.<sup>1</sup>

The Company, alarmed for the moment by the violence of the outbreak, abolished the post of sazawal. But no other measures were taken to eradicate the causes of distress. Indeed, a series of administrative changes occurred which made it less likely that remedies would be applied. The revenue jurisdiction of Palamau and other adjoining tribal areas was in 1800 transferred to the remote authority of the Collector of Bihar. The civil and criminal jurisdiction, nominally remaining in the hands of the Ramgarh magistrate, in practice was divided between him and the commander of the Ramgarh battalion. Special officials were appointed to get in the arrears of revenue from Palamau. In 1808/<sup>the</sup> Government appointed a register at Ramgarh to facilitate "the collection of the revenue of the hill and jungle estates on the western frontier of the provinces of Bengal and Bihar," and in 1810 R. Walpole was specially deputed to Palamau to realize arrears.<sup>2</sup>

One officer showed an awareness of Churaman's difficulties - Parry, who succeeded Walpole early in 1811. He reported that it was Akhauri Sheo Charan Ram, the qanungo and a relation of the late Udwant Ram, who "was the author of the distress and misfortunes of the Raja, and the distracted state of affairs in the pargana"<sup>3</sup> and to restore the raja's position Parry annulled all recent settlements and took

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1. Ibid.

2. Bridge, op.cit. Para. 57.

3. Ibid. Para. 58.

written undertakings from all the jagirdars to pay regularly according to the Decennial Settlement. Bikramajit Singh of Chainpur and Babu Chhatrapati Rai of Bisrampur, "two of the most wealthy but least respectable jagirdars" actively opposed Parry's efforts to get back to the Decennial Settlement, stirring up "the most refractory and turbulent natives."<sup>1</sup> Their efforts Parry crushed, and he imposed his new settlement on the district. But in doing so he went far beyond his instructions, he was recalled, and his settlements were annulled.<sup>2</sup>

That outcome of Parry's efforts was due not only to the resistance of the local jagirdars, but also to the opposition of Captain Roughsedge, the Commandant of the Ramgarh battalion, and "the most influential adviser of [the ] Government on political questions affecting this part of the country."<sup>3</sup> Roughsedge wished to see Raja Churaman's estate sold for arrears of revenue<sup>4</sup> partly from annoyance at the raja's failure to provide supplies for the troops engaged in operations in Palamau, partly from a wish to favour the loyal Raja of Deo, who had campaigned with him in Sambhalpur against the Pindaris, and in Nawagarh, Sarguja, Rewa and Nepal, by securing the estate for him.

The Government, rejecting Parry's attempt to save the dynasty, followed Roughsedge's advice. In 1813 Palamau was

1. Ibid.

2. But in practice his settlement continued to be in force in many cases.

3. Bridge, op.cit. Para.62.

4. Board to Govt., 30 Oct.1812, Beng. Rev.Cons. 10 of 14 Nov. 1812 (55) : Roughsedge's opinion, they said, must be given weight.  
56

put up for sale and purchased by the Government,<sup>1</sup> and the ruling / Chero dynasty came to an end. Churaman Rai was described in 1820 as "a mere cipher in its management [of his estate], and nearly an idiot [sic] in understanding, dissolute, extravagant and thoughtless,"<sup>2</sup> but even if that interested description of him be accepted as true, though written in justification of his deposition, it may still be asked whether any very serious efforts had been made to improve his qualities as a ruler. As a minor he had been entrusted to the care of a man of the most dubious character known to have been hostile to the young raja's family. The British Government did little to check the mismanagement practised by the diwan, and when the raja came of age, did nothing to help him restore his position. After his deposition/<sup>the</sup> Government was ready to acknowledge the difficulties of his position, admitting that so wild was the nature of the country and so lawless the inhabitants, that 'the realisation of the revenue partook more of the nature of voluntary contribution' than of an active and punctual enforcement of the rights of the Government,<sup>3</sup> but Parry's attempt to take account of those difficulties was scarcely welcomed. Certainly little attention was paid to tribal feelings when Roughsedge's policy was approved and the

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1. Board to Govt., 15 June 1813, Beng. Rev. Cons. 8 of 26 June 1813. (56<sub>5</sub>)

2. W. Hamilton, Description of Hindustan, I, 287.

3. Bradley-Birt, Chota-Nagpore, 221-222.

Chero's hereditary ruler sold up.<sup>1</sup>

Churaman - and his son Ran Bahadur Rai after him - was given a life pension of Rs.300 a month,<sup>2</sup> but when the son sought to take possession of his ancestral village Shahpur, he was ejected by Cuthbert, the Collector and Magistrate of Ramgarh.<sup>3</sup> Ran Bahadur made no other move against the Company; indeed he took part on its side against the Cheros, his own people, in the unrest of 1832.

But though Ran Bahadur thus forgot the injustice done to him and to his father, his tribal people did not. Indeed, they ascribed all their misfortunes to their raja having accepted a pension and thus wilfully renouncing his claim over the zamindari.<sup>4</sup>

The Company had, in fact, half anticipated that they would prove hostile. In September 1813 the Bihar Collector had warned the Government against attempting the direct .

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1. In 1814 the Ramgarh assistant collector had rightly supported Raja Churaman's petition to have the estate returned to him on payment of his dues, urging that thereby "many troublesome consequences of transferring Palamau to a stranger will thus be avoided": H. Robertson to Board, 18 Dec. 1814, Beng. Rev. Cons. 55 of 29 July 1815 (56/33)
  2. Board to Ramgarh Asstt. Collecotr, 14 June 1816, Para.6, Beng.Rev. Cons. 48 of 31 July 1818 (57/46)  
Board to Govt., 26 March 1824, Para.2, Beng. Rev. Cons. 39 of 9 Apl. 1824 (60/5)
  3. Cuthbert to Board, 13 Apl.1827, Para.50, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 54 of 14 June 1827 (138/22)
  4. Ramgarh Magt. to Govt., 9 May 1817. Para.2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 16 May 1817 (132/58)



management of a pargana with notorious inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> When the Raja of Deo was installed in the estate, he was warned not to disturb the existing tenures, nor to enhance the rents, fixed so far back as the year 1789.<sup>2</sup>

But Ghanshyam Singh, the son and successor of the Deo raja, as soon as he had been installed by Captain Roughsedge, at the head of a battalion,<sup>3</sup> found himself faced with Churaman's old problems of inadequate revenues and overgrown subordinates. He attempted, more vigorously than the Chero raja had dared to do, to solve these problems by protesting against the usurpations of the Palamau jagirdars and by resuming some 107 villages.<sup>4</sup> (Had he been able peacefully to pursue such policies, Roughsedge's prophecy that "the character of Futteh Narain [the father of Ghanshyam] will do wonders, and I expect to see Palamau from the worst, become the best managed

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1. Vide Board to Govt., 26 Oct. 1813, Para.3, Beng. Rev.Cons. 11 of 6 Nov. 1813 ( $\frac{56}{9}$ )
  2. Resolution, Govt., Beng. Rev. Cons. 54 of 29 July 1815 ( $\frac{56}{33}$ )  
"It will be advisable," said the Resolution, "to instruct Major Roughsedge to endeavour to impress in the strongest manner on the Raja's mind, the obligation and necessity of maintaining the settlement formed with the jageedars..."
  3. Roughsedge to Govt., 6 Apl. 1816, Para.2, Beng. Rev.Cons. 42 of 26 Apl.1816 ( $\frac{56}{45}$ ) Raja Ghanshyam Singh had requested for such an exhibition of military support because he was "apprehensive from the extreme ignorance and foolishness of the inhabitants that unless supported by your [of the Commander of the Ramgarh battalion] presence they may resist my authority." His petition, N.D., Beng. Rev.Cons. 3 of 6 Jan. 1815 ( $\frac{56}{26}$ )
  4. W.Blunt to Govt., 18 March 1818, Para.17, Beng.Rev.Cons.48 of 31 July 1818 ( $\frac{57}{46}$ )

pergunnah in your district"<sup>1</sup> might have been proved correct). But in fact Ghanshyam Singh's vigorous action caused a great Chero rising in 1817.<sup>2</sup>

It was at first believed that the attack upon the non-tribal outsiders, the officers of the Deo raja, who had resumed the Chero holdings, was the work of the petty Chero tenure holders of <sup>r</sup>ijaradars who had not been given the protection provided for the jagirdars in the sanad to the raja.<sup>3</sup> But it was later discovered that the outbreak, which laid waste much of Palamau,<sup>4</sup> had been mainly fostered by the very same jagirdars who had made Raja Churaman's position untenable.

Lindsay, the magistrate, who was ordered in May 1817 to investigate the grievances of the Cheros, believed that it was a people's rising. "The cheroos [cheros] and the kairwars [kharwars] are undoubtedly the persons who have perpetrated the outrages in Palamow, ... the most distant suspicion cannot be entertained for a moment against the

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1. Roughsedge to Fleming, Magistrate, 14 Jan. 1814, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 16 May 1817 (<sup>132</sup>/<sub>58</sub>)

2. Board of Rev., Bihar & Benares, to W. Money, Bihar collector, 8 Sept. 1818, Para. 1, Beng. Rev. Cons. 5 of 26 Feb. 1819 (<sup>58</sup>/<sub>2</sub>)

3. Ramgarh Magt. to Govt., 21 Apl. 1817, Para. 2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 2 May 1817 (<sup>132</sup>/<sub>58</sub>)

4. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 17-18 of 2 May 1817 (<sup>132</sup>/<sub>58</sub>)

Ex-zemeendar or jagheerdars."<sup>1</sup> Roughsedge and other military officers, however, suspected that the jagirdars were implicated. Lieutenant Brett, for example, reported that "the commotions in this district have been caused by the success which has uniformly attended Chutterputtee Rai in warding [off] the processes of the court of Ramghur, in the artful designing and malignant nature of the jageerdar of Chainpore Ram Buksh Sing, and his son Becker-majeet Singh; and the lawless spirit prevalent amongst the petty cheroo chiefs, the most notorious of whom are Puhlwan Singh of Chundoo, Jeet Sing of Obra, Suraj Singh of Koorka, Poorun Singh of Lohurseimee, and Aokloo Manjee of seedook."<sup>2</sup> In the vigorous campaign to restore order such jagirdars as Bikramajit Singh and Ram Baksha Singh accordingly suffered much, and after the rising had been suppressed, W. Blunt, the Superintendent of Police of the

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1. Lindsay to Govt., 9 May 1817, Para.2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 16 May 1817 ( $\frac{132}{58}$ )
  2. J. Brett to Roughsedge, 19 May 1817, Para.2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 38 of 30 May 1817 ( $\frac{132}{59}$ )

Lower Provinces, was specially deputed to give a correct picture to the Government.<sup>1</sup>

Blunt proved conclusively that the late commissioner's view that the commotions were caused "principally, if not exclusively", by "the machinations and intrigues of the ex-zamindar, & certain jagirdars and others, in combination with dissaffected persons in Sirguja" to expel Raja Ghanshyam, was wrong.<sup>2</sup> Now the oppressions of the raja, who wanted the landholders to execute a fresh agreement with him to pay more revenue than they had been paying since Leslie's days, was conclusively proved.<sup>3</sup>

1. The Commission formed by Lindsay and Roughsedge was dissolved on a representation made by some jagirdars, though Roughsedge protested against this:  
Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 20 Ja. 1818 ( $\frac{133}{20}$ )
2. Blunt to Govt., 18 March 1818, Para.2, Beng. Rev. Cons. 48 of 31 July 1818 ( $\frac{57}{46}$ )
3. Ibid. Para.4.

The experiment of entrusting the estate to the management of an outsider (Raja Ghanshyam<sup>was</sup>) therefore abruptly terminated, despite the efforts of Roughsedge to protect the interests of his friend the Deo raja. Moreover, the properties of Bikramajit Singh of Chainpur, of Shiva Prasad Singh of Ranka, of Chhatradhari Singh of Lokeya, Gajpati Rai of Bisrampur, Jit Singh of Obra, Sheoraj Singh of Koorha, of Pahalwan Singh and Puran Singh were confiscated, "for various periods, mostly of short duration", while Sheoraj Singh and Jit Singh were condemned to life imprisonment in Alipur jail.<sup>2</sup>

The activities of the very jagirdars who had been protected against the Chero Raja Churaman by the Company were thus in 1818 declared to have been injurious, and many who had risen by usurpations and extortion during his minority were now deposed. But the further step, of recognising the rights and sentiments of the Chero people, was not taken. Rather loose phrases about the "vile, rebellious and intriguing" nature of the people of Palamau continued to be used.<sup>3</sup>

Nor was much attention paid to the fluctuating and inefficient pattern of the British administration, though this had contributed over many years to the mismanagement of

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1. Bridge, op.cit. Para.70. Also see Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons.42 of 1 Nov. 1827, (138)  
31.

2. Bridge, op.cit. Para.72.

the estate. Something has already been said about the various changes in that system. It should be noted that changes continued. From 1809 to 1816 an assistant collector, stationed alternately for six months at Chatra and six at Sherghati, acted for the collector at Bihar. From 1817 he was placed under the Board of Commissioners for Benares and Bihar. Then in 1819, after a lapse of nineteen years, the Ramgarh collectorate was re-established, to which Palamau was attached. Such constant changes in such distant control necessarily precluded any continuity of policy and the growth of any sympathetic understanding of the problems of Palamau.

If the machinery was inadequate, the policy enforced was inappropriate. In this wild tribal area the rules and regulations of settled areas were freely introduced. Though the Raja of Palamau had protested as far back as 1793 against the introduction of a land revenue system based on measurement (rakababandi) and the paraphernalia of formal pattas, etc., into villages which, he said, were "farmed...by conjecture and ancient customs",<sup>1</sup> his cry went unheeded. Again, non-tribal amlas - amins, ganungoes, police darogas and the like - were freely appointed in the pargana, though they all too often abused their authority. Of this, the history of the ganungoes appointed to Palamau provided ample proof. Much of the deplorable decline in the chiefship could be attributed,

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1. Enclosure, Ramgarh collector to Board, 17 Aug. 1793, Beng. Rev. Cons. 82 of 27 March 1794 (53)  
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as has been seen, to the activities of the first two qanungoes. The third qanungo, Silwant Ram, proved as bad a bargain. His fault was complete idleness, so that in 1823, after two years in office, he had to be dismissed.<sup>1</sup> His successor, who lasted until 1832, was more active, but mainly in concocting reports whose falsity was proved in the enquiries of that year.

Differences of opinion (between successive collectors) only made matters worse. N.Smith, the Ramgarh collector, after the suppression of the rising against Ghanshyam Singh, ordered collections to be made according to Leslie's Old Decennial settlement, but he also suggested to Government, on 23 September 1823 that the Company, as the zamindar of Palamau should examine not only all tenures created since Leslie's Settlement [of 1197 fasli], but even those of earlier creation.<sup>2</sup> He proceeded to classify all under-tenures in the estate into jagirs and ijaras, rent-free tenancies (minhai), mortgages, religious grants, mukarraris and so on, and upon that basis produced another settlement, to run for five years from 1824-25.<sup>3</sup> He also sold up Tarhasi estate, the jagir of Bisrampur (on the grounds that the proprietor "was always drunk with opium and nototiously incapable of managing his estates") and was only prevented by a last-minute payment of dues from attaching Ranka estate.<sup>4</sup>

These actions and proposals of Smith's were strongly

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1. Bridge, op.cit. Para .74.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Paras. 75-76.

4. Ibid. Para. 76.

objected to by his successor as collector, Cuthbert. He disapproved of the idea of an enquiry reaching as far back as 1789, he protested against the practice of selling up rather than attaching the holdings of under-tenure holders. His own view was that the jagirdars and others "who possess no greater rights than subordinate Talookdars and Putteedars [patnidars] in other parts of the country" had forfeited all their privileges when the estate was put up for sale.<sup>1</sup> But since the Government had acknowledged their rights after that sale, they could not, he thought, "with propriety depart from its former line of conduct."<sup>2</sup> He, therefore, opposed Smith's proposal of taking legal measures for the dispossession of these jagirdars.

In 1828, A.Prinsep, appointed special Commissioner in Palamau,<sup>2</sup> raised the question of alienation of villages by jagirdars, and quoted several cases which had occurred since 1813. This led to a request from Government for a further report. Prinsep thereupon began more enquiries, and by 1830 most of the tenure-holders had filed lists of their properties with Prinsep - who thereupon died,<sup>4</sup> and so put an end to the matter for the time being. The whole question of tenures, revenue, alienations etc. remained in a state of flux.

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1. S.T.Cuthbert to Board, 13 Apl.1827, Para.3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 54 of 14 June 1827 ( $\frac{138}{22}$ )
  2. Ibid. Para. 4.
  3. Vide Board to Govt., 25 Sept. 1827, Para.35, Beng. Rev. Cons. 48 of 25 Oct. 1827 ( $\frac{61}{25}$ )
  4. Bridge, op.cit. Para.80.



The Board of Revenue had expressed in 1824 their fear that Palamau would never be peaceful until all agrarian questions had been set at rest.<sup>1</sup> The changes of authority and opinion, outlined above, made it impossible for those questions to be set at rest. The risings of 1832 followed almost inevitably.

#### Chota-Nagpur:-

To the east and south of Palamau lies Chota-Nagpur and its dependent parganas, a high, rather isolated table-land approached on all sides by passes (ghats or pats) which are easily defended and which in the 18th century were rarely fit even for bullock carts. Within this hill region there are two distinct plateaux, that to the north-west, on average some 2,000 feet above sea level, rising to 3,600 feet, and a lower plateau to the south-east at about 1,000 feet. Both stand high above the surrounding provinces, and as S.C.Roy has said", remarkably refreshing is the contrast its blue hills and rugged ravines, green sal jungles and terraced fields of yellow paddy, limpid hill-streams rushing down their narrow beds of rock and sand, and picturesque waterfalls, leaping over abrupt precipices, present to the monotonous stretch upon stretch of Bengal plains, broken here and there by some muddy meandering creek or khāl or by some mighty river tardily rolling down with its load of loam and silt into the sea."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid. Para. 81.

2. Roy, Mundas and their country, 354-355.

As with Palamau, the difficult, heavily wooded approaches to the area have made Chota-Nagpur a refuge for tribal people. Hamilton, in 1828, commented on the extensive hilly tract<sup>1</sup>, "much covered with forest; formerly fostered with great care by its chiefs, as a protection against invasion from without; indeed, the nature of the country is such as would render it extremely difficult either to penetrate or subdue, on account of the unhealthy jungles, so deleterious to troops not born on the spot."<sup>1</sup>

The tribal inhabitants of this area are called by a variety of names - Mundas, Oraons, Mahalis etc.,<sup>2</sup> and early ethnologists such as Dalton described them all as Kolarians, distinguishing among the Kols the Munda Kols in Chota-Nagpur proper, Larka Kols in Singhbhum, and Bhumij Kols in Manbhum and Dhalbhum.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the

1. East India Gazetteer, I, 415.
2. Cuthbert, the collector of Ramgarh, wrote in 1827 that there were three kinds of kols - Rumeen [kumea?], oorawun [oraon] and Moonda [Munda]: S.T.Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para.46, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (<sup>138</sup>/<sub>22</sub>)
3. Ethnology, 152. In 'Kols of Chota-Nagpore' J.A.S.B. Vol.35, Part II, 154, Dalton had also included Oraons in this definition. W.W.Hunter, however, says that "the word kol is really a generic term, including the two tribes of Munda Kol, and Larka or fighting Kol ...," Statistical Account, XVI, 266. Those of Chota-Nagpur proper were also called Dhangar Kols. Even today the Oraons are called Dhangars.

the word Kol is a very loose term, used by the Hindoos of the plains as a word of derision. (De Meulder thus describes it as an Indian equivalent of the word 'nigger' in the United States).<sup>1</sup> A military officer, writing in 1833, provides the key to how the various names were applied at that time when he reports "the Cole is always a Cole, and a Bhumij a Bhumij, but when a Cole takes service as a labourer, he is styled 'D'hangar', when he takes to plundering, the Cole is called 'Lurka', and the Bhoomij 'chooar'.<sup>2</sup> Dalton himself was forced at a later date<sup>3</sup> to admit that only the Mundas and other kols could properly be described as Kolarian,<sup>4</sup> and that the Oraons, as a Dravidian race, had to be treated separately. It is clear indeed that though the Mundas and Oraons live in the same area of Chota-Nagpur and though both are

1. Tribal India Speaks. 39. Dalton in 'Kols of Chota-Nagpore', J.A.S.B. Vol.35, Part II, 154, says that "this word is one of the epithets of abuse applied by the Braminical races to the aborigines of the country..."
2. A Subaltern, 'Sketch of the Campaign', East India, No.III (old series) 184, footnote.
3. Ethnology, 152.
4. Dr. Griffiths comments, "the word 'kol' was once used in a generic sense to describe 'Munda-Speaking' tribes and the term 'Kolarian' is still frequently found, especially in older text books of Ethnology. The word was originally used by Max Muller in a linguistic sense:" W.G.Griffiths, Kol tribe of Central India, Preface.

cultivating classes, yet their customs and habits are quite distinct.

These tribal people were, and are, remarkable for **their** physical strength and hardiness. Roy comments that the oraon has a "better physique than many of his neighbours who pride themselves on their 'higher caste'". The Oraon is sturdy in his limbs and erect in his bearing."<sup>1</sup> His account of their exceptional physical endurance<sup>2</sup> can be matched by the much earlier comments of men like Drummond who in 1841 wrote "They undergo with patient endurance the most incredible fatigues; extremely active, their movements are accomplished with the utmost celerity, ... No obstacle, however great, is capable of subduing their

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1. Oraons, 88.

2. Ibid. 91: "In repose an average Oraon adult can abstain from food for about twenty-four hours, and in exercise for about twelve hours without much inconvenience .....On occasions of their periodical socio-religious ceremonies, Oraon young men and women usually spend two, three or more consecutive nights in dancing and singing and indulge in very little sleep. The Oraon can bear cold very well, as well as exposure to the direct rays of the sun, - with his head uncovered ....In the youth of both sexes, [there is] exuberance of health and spirits, a delight in all physical activities, and taking life easy ..."

utmost courage and perseverance in the attainment of any desired object."<sup>1</sup>

The reputation of some of these hardy hill folk (especially of the Mundas of Tamar) was that of a fierce barbarian crew, to be compared with Maratha or Pindari marauders - "a set of blood-thirsty yet cowardly wholesale murderers",<sup>2</sup> Indian equivalents of 'Rob Roy and his worthy fellows',<sup>3</sup> criminals "prodigal in blood." But such a picture was based upon that drawn and displayed to the outer world by intruders whose presence in Chota-Nagpur was usually most justly resented, that is by the Hindu and Muslim merchant and money-lender, the alien thikadar, jagirdar or nilamdar (auction purchaser) who were so often "the greatest eyesores to the Mūndā."<sup>4</sup>

With a closer acquaintance British opinion changed. Thus Dalton, while admitting that the Mundas were less truthful, manly and open than the Hos, added "but then the Mundas have lived for ages under conditions ill-calculated to develop the good qualities for which I have given the Hos credit. There has been a continued struggle to maintain what they

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1. Drummond, MS. Statistical Account, 33-34.

2. 'Tee-to-Tum,' Bengal Hurkaru, 8 March 1832.

3. A Subaltern, op.cit. 185.

4. Roy, Mundas, 538.

consider their right in the land against the adverse interest of the landlord or his assigns.....They live among a people who look down on them as a degraded race, and one of whose favorite [sic] theories is, that the Kols were created to serve them. This, no doubt, must be as demoralising as it is aggravating...".<sup>1</sup> Davidson, writing in 1839,<sup>2</sup> described them as an agricultural people" deriving their subsistence from tilling the earth, either on their own account or as servants to others. They are generally a very innocent and simple race, with little proclivity to crime, except, when impelled by superstition,<sup>3</sup> which leads to the perpetration of violent crimes, or by hunger which impells them to theft, robbery etc.

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1. Ethnology, 206.

2. J.Davidson to J.R.Ousely, 14 Aug. 1839, No.235. Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.Agent's office, Patna Archives.

3. One crime to which the Kols were addicted was the murder of witches - in whose powers, as Roy says, even present-day Mundas often believe. [Mundas, 486]. Neave, the second judge of the Patna Court in Cornwallis' day was surprised to find village courts in the wildest part of the Chota-Nagpur hills, condemning to death those convicted of witchcraft, generally old women. In 1809 a case was reported by Walpole, the Ramgarh Magistrate, of a man killing a woman because he firmly believed that she was a witch and that her incantations had destroyed two of his children (Even the Maharaja was accused of such a crime in 1819) and similar cases were reported by Cuthbert in 1826-27. Such murders were scarcely crimes, however, but rather executions approved by the tribal society of Chota-Nagpur as they had been legally approved and put into force in tribal Scotland until the reign of George I. The murders occasionally committed by tribesmen on the orders of their rajas and chieftains may also be put in the same category of crimes "that naturally grow out of a demi-barbarous or infant state of society." Walpole for one recognised that such acts were quite acceptable to a tribal society wherein loyalty to the chief was of paramount importance". Ramgarh Actg. Magt. to G.Dowdeswell, 15 Jan. 1810, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 2 Feb. 1810 (130) Also see Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 62 of 29 Dec.1809. (12)

No. 6 Selection of Papers from Records at East India House, II, 11. ①

.....With few exceptions, there are no people who subsist entirely by committing depredations on property, nor is there any class of hereditary thieves and robbers... as is believed is frequently/<sup>found</sup>in the more civilized parts of India." Newspaper correspondents reporting what they found in Chota-Nagpur during the risings of 1832, often commented in like manner upon the hardworking peaceable nature of the Kols: "The Dunga [Dhangar] Coles are an industrious, hardworking race and by no means warlike, who would have preferred, had it been in their power, appealing to the law instead of the sword for protection against their oppressors."<sup>1</sup> Another report described them as pursuing "the occupation of cultivators, and when sowing time is over that of Bhangy-burdars [load-bearers], classes [khala~~s~~sis], and bullock-drivers, to all who may give them employ.....We have seen a good deal of the Danghas [Dhangar Kols] and to us they have ever appeared a quiet, hard-working, and simple race of people, and the last in the world likely to get up a foray."<sup>2</sup>

That the Kols were a peaceful agricultural people<sup>3</sup> rather than marauders from the hills and jungles was again impressed upon the British during the campaign of 1832 when many officers were evidently much surprised by the fertility of Chota-Nagpur, and the high state of cultivation of many

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1. Jassoos, 4 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 March 1832.

2. Govt. Gazette, Cal., quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 1 Feb. 1832.

3. The Oraons and Santhals in my own village are most hard-working cultivators. But the former as compared to the latter, are considered more hardworking and peaceful.

areas. Lohardugga, Pitoria, Barkagarh, Govindpur and Tamar were found to be extremely rich and fertile. One officer's journal thus records that at that time the sixteen miles of open country between Pitoria and Churia were in "the highest state of cultivation."<sup>1</sup> From Tikoo to Churia again there was another great belt of cultivation, fifteen miles in breadth and fifty in length, with Lohardugga, its centre, "an extensive and populous place."<sup>2</sup> On that side the country was bounded by a line of hills commencing about seven miles north of Tikoo and running south as far as Palkote, backed by the Jamari jungle. Again, as one turned east there was an open view from Korambi for some fifty miles, and the country, intersected by the river Koel and smaller streams, was finely cultivated until dense jungle supervened between Armai and Maharajganj. To the south of Armai, beyond Palkote, there were again jungles and the hills which marked the southern boundary of Chota-Nagpur. Towards the western borders of Chota-Nagpur the hills and jungles increasingly dominated even in the river valleys, though there were further pockets of good cultivation round Jurga, in the Kasir pargana and in the Barwa plain.<sup>3</sup> A correspondent of John Bull summed up the unexpected situation by saying: "So far from Chota-Nagpore being so poor a pergunnah as he [Dawkstager, another correspondent] describes, it is the most fertile and best cultivated

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1. Topographical sketch of Chotanagpore, Appendix A, Jt. Commissioners to Gort, 16 Nov. 1832, B.C.1502/58891.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



pergunnah that it has fallen to my lot to see, and there are few on this side of India through which I have not passed. It is a fine, open and flat country, with a rich, moist soil, and the cultivation extends to the very feet of the hills. Every one here is astonished at the beauty and fertility of a country which we expected to find a perfect wilderness."<sup>1</sup>

The dependant parganas of Chota-Nagpur - Tamar, Baranda, Rahi, Bundu, Silli and Barwa - were less well-cultivated. They had been loosely subordinate to Chota-Nagpur before British rule was imposed, and thereafter were permanently incorporated with Chota-Nagpur.<sup>2</sup> In 1809 Roughsedge described them as mostly jungly,<sup>3</sup> and the hill tract (to the east of Sonepur called the Hasda chaurasi of Tamar) which formed the boundary with Singhbhum to the south was only cultivated in the valley plots immediately surrounding the scattered villages. Their inhabitants, entirely kol, were as

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1. 'P' to John Bull, camp Pitouria, 29 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 8 March 1832. Another correspondent "A Looker-on" [camp in Chota-Nagpur, 18 March, Bengal Hurkaru, 30 March 1832] wrote, "A rich soil, capable of the highest cultivation, well wooded and beautifully undulated with all the variety of hill, dale and rock - watered by many streams rippling from the pure spring, and may be rather called the nursery of many rivers than said to contain one of fullgrowth." Spry, (Modern India, I, 326-327) wrote in 1837, "The soil of Chota-Nagpur is in many parts a peculiar kind of red earth, which is extremely fertile. In this soil cotton thrives luxuriously. The declivities consist of a very rich loam, and from the circumstance of the existence of innumerable springs, a few feet below the surface throughout the whole year, rice is abundantly produced with little labour to the husbandman."
  2. Cuthbert to Govt., 21 April 1832, Para. 20, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 Of 14 June 1827 (138)  
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  3. Drummond, op.cit. 23.

uncivilized and lawless as the Larka Kols of Singhbhum.<sup>1</sup> But nearer Chota-Nagpur proper, the parganas on the east had a fine open well-cultivated stretch of country along the banks of the Subarnarekha. This country was cut off from Chota-Nagpur itself by a line of hills running north and south, and formed marcher lordships against neighbouring Pacht.

One other estate was linked with Chota-Nagpur - Tori, below the ghats to the north-west of Chota-Nagpur proper. This was a large estate of some 700 villages, the ruler of which, loosely subordinate to the maharaja of Chota-Nagpur, had been attempting to assert his independence in the late eighteenth century. However when the Tori Raja Durgavijaya Sahi died without heirs in 1804, the British came to support the claims of the Chota-Nagpur maharaja against those of Durjavijaya's widow, and in 1819 was declared escheated to him.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary at this point to describe the position of the Chota-Nagpur maharaja and his relationship with his subordinates and tribesmen, and to describe the land system of the area. In the early years of the Munda and Oraon occupation of Chota-Nagpur, there seems to have been no individual ownership of land. The tribesmen cleared their village lands under the leadership of their headman or munda and village priest or pahan, who were responsible for re-allocating lands and collecting such dues or services as were owed to the

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1. Topographical sketch of Chota-Nagpore. Appendix A, Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, B.C. 1502  
58891.

2. Ibid.

community. In such parganas as Tamar, Rahi and Baranda, which were difficult of approach and strongly fortified by nature, something of this village organisation survived even into the nineteenth century. Cuthbert, the Ramgarh Magistrate, described the way the headmen and village priests transacted the village business, calling the village<sup>r</sup>s together in May and distributing to those wishing to cultivate their different portions of land.<sup>1</sup> No patta or written document was given; the extent of the cultivators' jote or field was shown before witnesses, and a piece of earth as a token of acceptance was taken from the headman or mahto as he was called in some areas.

Above the village was a wider tribal division, the purha or patti under a circle headman called the manki. The mankis had much influence over the tribal masses and at festival times, when the members of the purha assembled "to hunt, amuse themselves and decide disputes," the mankis exercised considerable authority.<sup>2</sup> Each parha had its distinguishing flag, "the attempt to make use of which by the Coles of another purha at their festivals immediately leads to serious quarrels."<sup>3</sup>

In the early middle ages there was no raja ruling over the country which was divided into purhas of 15 to 20 or even 25 villages, each under its manki and local mundas.<sup>4</sup> These

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1. S.T.Cuthbert, 21 Apl. 1827, para.36, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (<sup>138</sup>/<sub>22</sub>)

2. Davidson to Ousely, 29 Aug. 1839, Para.3, No.247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'Agents' office, Patna Archives.

3. Ibid. Para.3.

4. Ibid. Para.2.

local leaders probably received no rents but only assistance in war and a salami at festivals.

Then at some time between the 6th and 10th centuries A.D.,<sup>1</sup> the manki of Sutiambe, Phani Mukut Roy, was chosen as chief manki or raja by all the mankis and mundas. It was said that between that installation and the year 1839 some sixty-two rajas of the family had sat upon the Chota-Nagpur throne.<sup>2</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Chota-Nagpur-Kokrah or Coira Orissa as it was then called - attracted the attention of the northern empires of the Afghans and Mughals, who coveted its supposed riches in elephants and diamonds. In 1616 Raja Durjan Sal was seized by Mughal forces and was for some time held prisoner in Gwalior fort. This enforced contact with the Mughal empire in its heyday, enlarged the pretensions of the ruling family who changed Rai into Shāh and took the title of Maharaja.<sup>3</sup> At much the same time the raja and his court were converted to Hinduism. For the maharaja the Brahmans produced a hitherto unsuspected ancestral link with Pundarika, the mythological king of the Nags or snakes - the first raja was said to be the son of Pundarika by a Brahman girl - so that the dynasty

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1. D.G.Panchi, 24, says 6th century A.D., while Ranchi Settlement Report, Para.28, puts it in the 10th century.
  2. Davidson, to Ousely, 29 Aug.1839, Para.2. No.247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agents office, Patna Archives.
  3. Cuthbert wrote in 1827 that the title of Maharaja Chhatradhari was obtained from the Delhi Emperors, '67 years ago.' Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para.6, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138)

came to be called the Nag-Vansi.<sup>1</sup> Both raja and nobles claimed Rajput or Kshatriya status, and the royal family, prospering, managed, as Davidson reported, "by force to get married to the Rajpoot families of Puchnete [Pachet] and Singhbhum, and eventually into others" and so came to pass, in Davidson's day, "for as good Rajpoots as any in India."<sup>2</sup> Chota-Nagpur, in fact, provides a classic example of that process of incorporation of non-Aryan tribes into Hindu society which Risley has analysed - an example complete, as Risley put it, "with family miracle and all."<sup>3</sup> The completion of the process, though not its beginning, can be dated from the temples known to have been constructed by the Chota-Nagpur rajas. The Borea temple was built between 1665 and 1682, that at Doisa in the years 1683-1711, that at Chutia in 1685, at Jagannathpur in 1691, and that at Tilmi in 1737.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the 17th century it is clear that the dynasty had been hinduized. The temples in turn imply the presence of large establishments of priests, and as a corollary the grant of tribal lands for their support, under the title of

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1. Ibid. Para. 6. N.Smith, the Joint Magistrate for Chota-Nagpur, wrote [to Govt. 19 June 1823, Para.8, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 21 of 26 Jan.1826 (137)<sup>38</sup>] that the Maharajas "for the last two generations" had "adopted the religion of the Rajpoots", and that they worshipped Durga and Lakshmi and had a serpent temple with a flag with the ensign of three snakes on it.
  2. Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para.2, No.247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agent's Office, Patna Archives.
  3. Tribes, I, Introduction, P xvi.
  4. D.G.Ranchi, 27.

brahmottar, debottar and britt lands. "The dazzling splendour of the Muhammadan Emperor's court, the pomp and pageantry, the wealth and power, which he had witnessed in the courts of the Hindu Rājās of Northern India whose acquaintance he had made, revolutionised the Nāgbansi Rājā's ideal of royalty. And the Rāi Rājā, now a full-fledged 'shāhi Mahārājā, soon gathered about himself a pompous retinue of Brahman priests, Rajput and pseudo-Rajput courtiers, and amlahs and place-hunters belonging to various Hindu and Hinduised castes."<sup>1</sup>

The Mughal example of regal grandeur and Brahman assurances of social superiority worked upon the minds of the Maharajas and their courtiers, weakening the sense of tribal solidarity. By the 18th century the 'kshatriya' ruler was looking down upon the unconverted tribesmen, of whom Hamilton wrote "the Dhanggar are still impure unconverted mlechchas or barbarians,"<sup>2</sup> and Bishop Heber (speaking of the aborigines in general), "they have no castes, care nothing<sup>3</sup> for the Hindoo deities, and are even said to have no idols". (A correspondent, writing to the Bengal Hurkaru in 1832, said "What struck me particularly, in this singular people, was their Jew-like propensities to eat pork, dogs, tigers, bears, cats, rats, snakes, or any other stray dead animal that they might chance to find.....").<sup>4</sup> By the late 18th and early 19th

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1. Roy, Oraons, 42.

2. East India Gazetteer, I, 415.

3. Narrative, I, 258: He was speaking about the people of the hills between Sikrigali and Burdwan.

4. 'A White Jew', Sambhalpur, 12 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 20 March 1832.

centuries the maharaja was largely alienated from the great mass of fellow tribesmen, even to the point of seeking outside assistance against them. Davidson pointed out that on the hinduization of the royal family and on their regularly intermarrying with neighbouring Hindu families "it became a great<sup>1</sup> object with them to induce other Hindoos to settle in Nagpore. The royal administration came to be staffed not by Kols or Oraons but by Kayasths from outside. Men such as Jay Kishore Roy, Sadasiva Roy, Din Nayal Nath (who was responsible for several criminal acts in the years 1807-09), Jonkiram and Basaharan were appointed diwans, tahsildars etc. others, such as Lachhaminath Roy, Jay Kishun Roy acted as priests (mahanthas or pandas, i.e. heads of temples and priests of places of pilgrimage respectively), and yet others such as Akhauri Behari Lal, Akhauri Bhairo Datta, Akhauri Lal Kishan, Mohan Lal and Akhauri<sup>u</sup> Basant Lal were found enjoying service villages.<sup>2</sup> Some of the newcomers, Baraiks, Rajpub, Ranteas even held jagirs at fixed rents which were granted for the performance, as Davidson reported, of military services - services used to cow the tribal subjects of the rajas they served.<sup>3</sup> A no less important group of non-tribal dependents of the maharaja and subordinate rajas was formed by the Brahmans, whose

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1. Davidson to R. Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 5. No. 247. Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agent's office, Patna Archives.
  2. See Appendix B, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C. 1502/58891.
  3. Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 6, No. 247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agents' office, Patna Archives.

influence over the new converts was very strong.<sup>1</sup> They secured very extensive grants of land, especially in the Khukhra and Doesa parganas, near the maharaja's residence. Davidson described the "Brahmins [sic] and individuals of other castes who have come from below the Ghauts & got grants of lands generally by purchase at fixed rents from the different Rajas, sometimes also rent-free, and also grants of rent-free lands<sup>2</sup> for religious purposes, in the mode usually given by Hindoos."

All these outsiders - including even Muslim merchants<sup>3</sup> and servants of the maharaja and the dependent rajas - were provided with land at the expense of the tribal cultivators. So were the members of the royal family who received extensive grants to support their dignity - again at the tribesmen's expense. Since this expropriation was accompanied by much disdain or even hatred of the still unconverted masses on the part of the new landowners, and much exploitation, sharp cleavages occurred in Kol Society, leading in time to violent unrest.

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1. Gosain Jai Sree Sree Sankha Ramnath Deo, for instance, had 32 villages in Khukhra, Guru Ramdeo had  $1\frac{1}{4}$ , Purohit (Priest) Maniram 13, Guru Boohram  $5\frac{3}{4}$ , Pathak Shambhunath 2, Deogharia Maheshram 1, Pramanik Krishnaram 4, Mishra Mohan Roy 4, Pathak Anandram 1, Kalyan 1, Ramjanam Panda  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; and a hundred other Upadyayas, Pandas, Shuklas, Towaris, Dubeyes, Pandeyes, Mahapatras, Mishras, Chauleys and other Brahmanas from Orissa and Bihar were enjoying grants. Vide Appendix, Jt. Commissioners, 16 Nov. 1832, B.C.1502/58891.
  2. Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 10, No. 247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agents' office, Patna Archives.
  3. "These men were Mussulmans, Sikhs, and some others, who came to the country as horse-dealers and shawl and brocade merchants, fetched enormous offers for their goods from the Nagvanai chiefs, and obtained farms of villages instead of cash, of which latter the chiefs were always in want." Rakhal Das Haldar, First Special Settlement Commissioner, Supplement to Calcutta [Govt.] Gazette, 1 Dec. 1880.



Here and there, it is true, local conditions enabled the mankis and mundas to survive, and to protect tribal institutions - as in remote Tamar, Rahi and Baranda, or in Sonepur where the original heads of villages were strong enough to inspire fear. Elsewhere however, the headmen "were entirely dispossessed and replaced by Suds (foreigners) or their villages [were] resumed by the Raja himself."<sup>1</sup> How far the process of alienation of originally tribal land had gone by 1832 can be seen from a table of grants prepared in November 1832 by Dent and Wilkinson, the Joint Commissioners for Chota-Nagpur:<sup>2</sup>

Description of Tenures	Total No. of Villages.	Total Jama of <u>Malguzaree</u> payable to the Maharaja.
1. Kunwars and Thakurs	1156	2985 - 2 - x
2. Diwan, Dufturea, Mutsuddies and the Jagirdars' grants to Diwans, clerks and pensions connected therewith.	122	1344 - 11 - x
3. Thakurs for service when called upon to do so.	139 $\frac{3}{4}$	3163 - 1 - 9
4. Jagirdars and Ghatwas or military jagirdars	760	8842 - 14 - x
5. Omnuk and others	57	1371 - 6 - x
6. Huzoor Bhitwea or Personal attendants of the Raja.	83	1157 - 7 - x
7. Bhiturea or Personal attendants of the Raja.	66 $\frac{3}{4}$	1168 - 12 - 6

1. Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para.8, No.247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agent's office, Patna Archives.
2. Appendix B to Jt. Commissioner to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C. 1502 The spelling of this statement has been modernized.

Description of Tenures.	Total No. of Villages.	Total Jama of Malgurzaree
8. <u>Dudh Bhaee</u> or grants to foster brothers of the present & former Rajas.	17	224 - 10 - x
9. Kush and Brahmans (grants to Brahmans on very moderate rents	130 $\frac{1}{2}$	175 - 3 - 2
10. Debottar Khas	35	456 - x - x
11. Jagirdars (people who received grants for services performed)	54 $\frac{1}{2}$	2641 - 1 - 6
12. Jagirdars and Baraiks (Brittadars) hereditary jagirdars on condition of performing military service	73 $\frac{1}{2}$	4206 - 1 - x
13. Bhandar Elaqa (literally, the granary from the rents being principally collected in kind, corresponding to Khalsa villages in other areas).	151	585 - x - x
14. Bhandar Elaqa Kunwaran	82	304 - x - x
15. Khairat villages	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	- - - -
16. For service grants held on service tenures	58	2218 - 11 - x
17. For service	23	143 - 14 - x
18. Brahmans & Kusha Britta grants for support of Brahmans	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	41 - x - x
19. Deori Mahal-Sree Sree Pati Mahadeo-Maharane assignments for the support of the Ranee and other inmates of the palace	1123	1270 - 15 - 6
20. Thakurais etc. pensioners or grants for the support of the widows of the deceased members of the Raja's family	104 $\frac{1}{2}$	- - - -

Description of Tenures,	Total No. of Villages	Total Jama of Malgurzar <del>ee</del>
21. For Musaham (allowance for support)	5	- - - - -
22. Khas Bhandar villages in the Raja's khas management.	24	- - - - -
Total	4,288 $\frac{1}{2}$	33,877 - 13 - 3

1. Drummond (MS. Statistical Account, 20-21) asserted a decade later that the item Deoree Mahal was a glaring instance of inconsistency in this table. In Heatly's time [date not given], he said, the total revenue was discovered to be upwards of a lakh and a half of rupees, and even that sum was probably much understated. As an explanation of these items, Drummond wrote the following: The lands derived their names from the rank of the holders. A kunwar was the older brother of the royal family next to the raja. The younger brothers were called Thakurwur. The raja's sons were called Tikaits during the father's lifetime and when the elder brother succeeded to the Rajship, the remainder became the older a kunwar and the other Thakurwurs. Thus the Raja's uncle, grand uncle and great grand uncle, should there be one, were kunwas. The Thakurwurs naturally would be more numerous. So the lands called kunwaran and Thakurwan were held of these people of the Raja's family. Ibid. 22-23: Nos. 3 & 20 were the subordinate branches of the family, and their dependants; No. 5 villages given by the raja to a number of dependants, one having  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a village, another a half etc.; No. 6 villages divided amongst the immediate attendants of the raja; No. 7. villages generally given to the attendants on the raja's family provided they lived in the same dwelling, viz. the Rani, the raja's sisters etc.; No. 8. villages given to the foster brothers accumulated from generation to generation, as it was the custom for every raja to give such grants. This included foster sisters or Dudh Bahin also; No. 9 for the maintenance of the Brahman priests and for the performance of sacrifices, worship etc. to remove all dangers from the raja's path [Drummond here incorrectly says that Kush is a sect. In fact, it is a sacred grass with which the Brahmans perform sacrifices]. The raja could not put his foot into a kush Brahman village "so that if a public road lay through it, he would be obliged to go round the village till he came to the road again."

Footnote 1 continued from p.159

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No.10 villages granted to Brahmans "who are attached to the native places of worship; a tradition is current, that in one of these is a large diamond of a crooked shape which, if any other but the Raja and priest see, he will die;" No.11 villages given for particular services, but liable to be resumed, when the services are no longer required; No.12, Britda's differed from the jagirdars in as much as the latter received villages perpetually settled on them, for their own and posterity's service when required by the raja; No.13 villages for the raja's own cattle, stores etc.; No.14 villages allotted for a like purpose to Kunwars; No.15 villages given away by the raja as presents; No.18 villages bestowed much in the same principle as No.19; No.22 much the same as No.13, but yielding no revenue.

Quite apart from such alienation of land, the maharaja imposed heavy burdens of his own upon the people. Though he received some Rs.338,077 from his jagirdars, and further amounts from Tori pargana and from a number of Bhandar villages (lands of which were under his direct possession and cultivation) he also imposed a number of abwabs or cesses.<sup>1</sup> Whenever he bestowed a jagir or confirmed a sanad to the heirs of a deceased jagirdar he expected a nazarana of from 1,000 to 1,500 rupees. He raised other sums, as a sovereign, by the sale of titles such as a raja, kuwar, thakur, manki and so on. At the maharaja's own accession every village throughout Chota-Nagpur had to pay one rupee shahkharch (prince's expenditure) towards the cost of the investiture ceremony. At his marriage another cess was levied under the title of haldiyan and for his journey to the sadr station, for his pilgrimages to Gaya, Puri or other holy places yet another abwabs were imposed called madad (assistance) and mangan (gift or contribution).<sup>2</sup> Since the revenue officials who collected these dues certainly extorted more than was due, so as to fill their own pockets, and since the subordinate rajas also adopted similar customs, the total burden on the peasant was very heavy. Cuthbert, in 1827, even hazarded the guess that "under such a system of feudalism, giving rise and colour to

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1. Cuthbert, to Govt., 21 Apl.1827, Para.11, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827. (138) About Rs.80,000 came from the Bhandar village annually.<sup>22</sup>
  2. Ibid. Para.14-16. Haldi or turmeric is considered auspicious; so haldiyan was probably levied on auspicious ceremonies, e.g. marriage.

every species of extortion and plunder, it is not to be wondered at that the population of the province is so limited when compared with the extent of the area."<sup>1</sup>

The chiefs, jagirdars and other superior tenure-holders had no right under tribal custom to increase the rent of the village lands, nor could they turn out the old cultivators so long as they paid their rent. But these age-old customs came to be frequently violated by the non-tribal farmers.<sup>2</sup> Again, where the rent had been paid in service - three days' ploughing, three days work with the spade, three days of rice-planting and three days of harvest work and so on - the new owners came to demand far more work than custom had permitted.<sup>3</sup> Thikadars or revenue-farmers came to cultivate considerable areas by forced labour exacted without limit from the tribal ryots. Davidson admitted in 1839 "the poor Coles have all this time been submitting to be plundered of their labour, because they did not know how to get redress."<sup>4</sup>

The bhuihars (the original clearers of the land, e.g. the munda and the manki ) had a hereditary interest in the land, and even when they fled the village, they had a right to reclaim the land on their return. But the new farmers not only refused to recognise the right of their heirs, but also took possession of the land on their leaving the village. Not only that, but by lodging false complaints against them,

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1. Ibid. Para.17.

2. Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 14. No.247, Misc. Dispatch Book, G.G.'s Agent's office, Patna Archives.

3. Ibid. Para.15.

4. Ibid. Para.15.

they induced the bhuinhars to leave the village. The poor man could not go to the court, and even if he did, there was no chance of his success.<sup>1</sup>

If the new proprietors proved oppressive, so did the moneylenders, the mahajans or sahus, who advanced money at an interest of one anna per rupee [per month]<sup>2</sup>. The most degrading aspect of this moneylending business was that a borrower, when unable to repay the principal and interest, became a bondsman. There were three species of bondsmen - firstly, a borrower executing a sewakpatta (or sewak-patra or deed of slavery) that he would become the lender's bondsman or sewak for life - a bondage from which he could never be released, though his children would not be affected by it; secondly, a person, when borrowing, stipulated by a deed to serve the lender for a specified time or until the principal and the interest were cleared; thirdly, a person who hired himself for field labour, generally from the month of magh (January) to the end of Paus (December).<sup>3</sup> This usury turned many cultivators into virtual slaves. When they found cultivation unprofitable on account of exactions by the moneylender, and when they found the land slipping from their hands, they began to emigrate in large numbers to other parts of Bihar and Bengal where the indigo planters especially preferred them on account of their performing more work and at a

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1. Ibid. Para.19: "In nine out of ten cases the powerful zumeendar will thereby be able to defeat the poor Bhoonyar." [sic].

2. S.T.Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para.41. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138)  
22

3. Ibid. Para.44.

lower rate than other labourers.<sup>1</sup>

Such exactions, and the grant of so much tribal land to oppressive foreigners led to conflict between the kols of Chota-Nagpur and their maharaja. In that the people were often aided by their more warlike brethren, the Larka Kols of Singhbhum. In the 18th century the maharaja therefore attacked the Larka Kol country (Kolhan). There, however, he was defeated, and to add to his troubles the subordinate rajas of Tamar and the neighbouring parganas revolted and he became involved in a feud with the raja of Ramgarh.

To strengthen his position and standing the maharaja took the opportunity provided by Camac's presence in Palamau, campaigning against the Cheros to solicit his aid. In 1772 Camac and the maharaja exchanged turbans,<sup>2</sup> and Camac recommended to the Patna Council that they should enter into political relationship with the raja, pointing out that his estate would form an effective barrier to the incursions of the Marathas, and would give them the command of the passes into the Deccan. Since in Camac's Kharakdiha campaign of 1769-71 Raja Durpnath Sahi of Chota-Nagpur had rendered essential service and since he now offered to pay Rs.12,000 to the Company instead of the Rs.4,000 hitherto paid through the Ramgarh Raja, the Patna Council readily agreed to the maharaja's request to be taken under direct British protection.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid. Para.45.

2. D.G.Ranchi, 29: (footnote). There is an anecdote that the maharaja's was 'a jewelled turban of great value' which thus went to Camac. So exasperated was the maharaja that he vowed never to see any British officer again.

3. Deputy Secy. J.Thomason's note, 12 Apl.1832, Para.8. B.C.1363/54227. This Maharaja Durpnath Sahi died in 1791 when his son got the khillat on his accession.



In 1771 the first direct settlement was therefore concluded for three years, at Rs.12,000 per annum, and the raja received a khillat from the Company.

At one blow the maharaja had thus increased his prestige within his own country, and ended his subordination to the raja of Ramgarh. In 1772 he had the satisfaction of assisting the British troops in the reduction of his hated rival, the Ramgarh chief. However, his own control of Tori,<sup>1</sup> and the five parganas of Tamar, Bunduch<sup>2</sup> was not very complete, and he could seldom collect much revenue from them, while Chota-Nagpur was also subjected to many Maratha incursions. He, therefore, had some difficulty in making his stipulated payments to the Company. Nevertheless, after the clearance of his dues, a fresh settlement was made in 1774 for three years, and in 1779 a further settlement was even concluded at the higher rate of 15,001 sunat rupees a year (Rs.11,001 mal and Rs.4,000 nazarana).<sup>3</sup>

Little attempt was made by Capt. Camac in these early years to interfere in the internal affairs of the estate, In 1780, it is true, a judge-magistrate and collector were appointed to the newly-formed Ramgarh district, which included

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1. The maharaja requested Camac to restore all the districts recently seized by the Ramgarh raja, but the Patna Council, in view of conflicting claims, ordered the pargana of Tori to be restored: Camac to Revenue Council, 10 Dec.1773, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 22 of 26 Jan. 1826 ( $\frac{137}{38}$ )
  2. The revenue was not increased because Chota-Nagpur being a frontier country, the maharaja might be prompted to wish a change" in suzerainty. Camac to Rev.Council, 10 Dec.1773 and Rev.Council to Camac, 3 May 1774, Beng.Cr. Judl. Cons. 22 of 26 Jan.1826 ( $\frac{137}{38}$ )
  2. Thomason's note, 12 Apl.1832, Paras.10-11, B.C.1363/54227.

Chota-Nagpur,<sup>1</sup> but for all practical purposes, Chota-Nagpur owed only "a loose allegiance as a tributary Mahal, administered by its own chief."<sup>2</sup>

The Ramgarh collectors for their part made no very serious effort to make contact from their side. They never visited the area personally - whence such curious notions as that of Ramgarh that Chota-Nagpur was "an entire plain, well-peopled, and well-cultivated"<sup>3</sup> - and from ignorance, perhaps, were without understanding or sympathy. Twice, therefore, they suggested that the maharaja be deposed.<sup>4</sup>

However the maharaja was not deposed, but, unvisited, virtually independent, continued to administer "justice and the police under the feudal system that had previously prevailed, working through his vassals, some of whom were Rajas like himself of the old race, holding extensive estates, some of whom were brethren of his own in possession of maintenance grants, and some, persons on whom he had conferred jagirs on condition of their supporting him."<sup>5</sup> By the kabuliat or agreement of 1787 the maharaja had agreed to maintain law and order, and to desist from exactions, and in 1790 he was even granted a reduction, at the Decennial Settlement, in his revenue payments, on the grounds that certain old cesses had

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1. Regulations passed on 6 April and 5 July specifically placed Chota-Nagpur in the zilla of Chatra for the administration of civil justice.
  2. Hunter, Statistical Account, XVI, 19.
  3. Reid, Ranchi Settlement Report, Para.32.
  4. Thomason's note, 12 Apl.1832, Para.13, B.C.1363/54227. Also, Hunter, Bengal MS.Records, Nos.1009, 1136.
  5. Reid, op.cit. Para.35. There were six dependent rajas in Chota-Nagpur, rulers of the estates of Tamar, Bundu, Baranda, Silli, Rahi, Barwa and Tori.

since 1787 been given up,<sup>1</sup> but we have already seen how lightly such promises sat upon the maharaja and his hinduised chiefs. In fact, the British overlordship, since it was never effective in practice within the estate, acted as a cloak to the encroachments upon tribal life made by the chiefs and jagirdars. Even in Bengal proper the Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis had the effect of defining, even creating, the powers of the zamindars, but of blurring or destroying those of under tenure holders. In Chota-Nagpur, where the collector never set foot within the maharaja's territories - and where, even if he had, he would have been too ignorant of the language and customs of the people to understand their problems - the growth of the zamindar's power at the expense of the tribal headmen and ryots was even more marked.

In fact, as an anonymous contributor to the Calcutta Review<sup>2</sup> later pointed out, the English could not think in terms of peasant proprietorship, the right of the original clearers of the land and so on: "Feudalism so pervades English opinion and the English constitution since the Norman Conquest, that it is very difficult for an ordinary Englishman to understand what is familiar to other parts of the world." The Cornwallis system, with its zamindari bias, its standardized administrative forms, and its code of regulations was therefore applied to Chota-Nagpur, with little

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1. Copy of the Kabuliat and the patta, 1790, Beng. Rev. Cons. 43 and 44 of 2 Jan. 1824. (59)  
(61)

2. 'The Kols of Chota Nagpore', Calcutta Review, 1869, XLIX, 124.

questioning of its suitability.

Isolated attempts were made by some British officers to exempt this area from the general application of the regulations. But even these attempts were thwarted either by their successors in Office, by their superiors or more often still by the subordinate non-tribal civil servants. Leslie, for example, on 20 June 1789, opposing the extension of the Permanent Settlement into this area, expressed an apprehension that "the extending these Regulations to this district [Chota-Nagpur] will be attended with very bad consequences."<sup>1</sup> John Shore concurred with his argument that "the people who are jealous and uncivilized, may suppose the taking an account of their villages, and sending a person to collect the sayer duties, is a prelude to some more serious innovations, and may therefore be induced to make a resistance in the first instance, by which a very heavy expense may be incurred, but no advantage reaped."<sup>2</sup>

So the Resolution of the Bengal Government, 18 September 1789, which confirmed the Decennial Settlement in Bihar, precisely mentioned "that the Regulations do not extend to this district [Chota-Nagpur], but that the Settlement be continued on the present footing and be extended to a period of ten years."<sup>3</sup> But though the Permanent Settlement and the regulations were not formally extended to this estate, the

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1. J. Thomason's note, 12 Apl. 1832, Para.14, B.C.1363/54227.  
 2. Firminger, Fifth Report, II, 498.  
 3. Resolution 18 Sept. 1789, Enclosure. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 22 of 26 Jan. 1826. (137)  
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Government, whenever asked on this question, later on, decided that they should be held applicable to this estate.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, all the pernicious effects of the Permanent Settlement - rack-renting, resumption, sub-letting - were felt by the tribal peasantry. Their ancient tillage rights were merged in the "all devouring recognition of the zamindar's permanent property in the soil", which left the zamindar free to make settlements at his will.<sup>2</sup>

Shore's warning about innovations in this area was totally forgotten, and non-tribal subordinate officers and laws were blindly introduced in this area. Some of the innovations were opposed by the maharaja as well as by the people. Thus when the revenue official, the patwari, was introduced, the maharaja protested violently against their activities, such as land measurement, the issue of revenue demand agreements and receipts, and so on. "The people", he wrote, "take the ground unmeasured, the extent of which is known only by its name.....Pottahs particularizing the quantity of ground cannot be given."<sup>3</sup> On this occasion the Ramgarh collector, Hunter took note of the complaint. He wrote to the Board of Revenue testifying to "the simplicity of character and ignorance of the generality of the people," and pointing out that no pattas had ever been granted and no patwaris ever employed

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1. In 1799 and 1823.

2. 'Zamindar and the Bengal Ryot', Calcutta Review, VI, 319.

3. Petition, Maharaja Deonath Sahi Deo, N.D. Beng. Rev. Cons. 82 of 27 March 1794. (53)  
14

here,<sup>1</sup> and in 1794, by section two of Regulation VI a modification was introduced to meet the needs of the Bihar portion of the Ramgarh district. It was recognised that the ryots were "unable to read or write" and were "accustomed to cultivate the lands under verbal agreements, and terms entirely dissimilar to those which prevail in other parts of the provinces."<sup>2</sup> In 1800, Regulation X similarly modified the rule of inheritance to suit the special needs of the chiefs of the area.

In these two cases, however, the government had yielded to the combined opposition of chiefs and people. Where the ill-understood interests of the tribal people alone were concerned, the British did nothing. So the traders, settlers, and alien administrators were permitted to push forward their frontiers, encroaching steadily upon what had been the tribal people's sanctuary of custom. And when the people rose in protest<sup>3</sup> they were treated as marauders or rebels and hunted down by the troops.

On such occasions the non-tribal subordinate officers

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1. Hunter to Board, 17 Aug. 1793, Paras.6-8. Beng. Rev. Cons. 82 of 27 March 1794. (<sup>53</sup>/<sub>14</sub>)
  2. Extracts from Harrington's Analysis of the Bengal Regulations, 315, Footnote.
  3. There were revolts in Tamar in 1783, (crushed by Crawford), and others in 1789 which went on until 1795. In 1789 about three thousand insurgents assembled: M.Leslie, Ramgarh collector, to Board, 20 June 1789, Beng. Rev. Cons. of 1 July 1789 (<sup>51</sup>/<sub>39</sub>) p.496.

would exaggerate the criminality of the tribesmen,<sup>1</sup> the British officers usually were quite out of touch with the tribal rebels, and so hundreds of tribal people were killed. Even when the Chatra collector felt that this unrest resulted "more particularly from the universal oppression, mismanagement and want of method which prevails throughout Naugpore [Chota-Nagpur]"<sup>2</sup> he could find no means of getting in touch with the rebels, still less of finding a solution to their problems.

In 1793, when the Tamar rebels were joined by their brethren from Patkum, Silli and Singhbhum, the situation called for the employment of troops under Major Farmer for about a year.<sup>3</sup> Farmer, at the end of the campaigns, admitted that "on an attentive investigation into the causes of the general disaffection," he had had to change his opinion formed

1. Chiragh Ali, who led the troops against Bishnu Manki and Mangi Manki, the tribal leaders of Tamar, reported, for example, that the rebels had ordered the heads of the sepoys killed by them, to be cut off and affixed at the corners of the village: Leslie to Board, 12 June 1789, Beng. Rev. Cons. 24 June 1789 (<sup>51</sup>/<sub>39</sub>) p.152.

The sazawal in Chota-Nagpur (Bhola Nath Singh, the nazir of the Chātra court (Amar Singh), the hurkaras (peons) of the Court (Shakurulla Khan, Rahimulla Khan and others) and the hinduized Raja of Tamar (Govind Sahi) and his new non-tribal farmers represented to the Ramgarh magistrate that these bhuinhars (tribal rebel leaders) were very turbulent and rude, and not amenable to reason: Beng. Rev. Cons. 19 Aug. 1789, Part III, (<sup>51</sup>/<sub>44</sub>) pp.1731-1741.

2. Leslie to Board, 14 July 1789, Beng. Rev. Cons. 19 Aug. 1789, Part III, (<sup>51</sup>/<sub>44</sub>) p.1724.
3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 15 of 29 March 1793 (<sup>53</sup>/<sub>1</sub>) ; 16 of 24 May 1793 (<sup>53</sup>/<sub>2</sub>)

"from the insidious representations of the zemindar of Nagpore's vakeel."<sup>1</sup> "So rapacious and unrelenting" had been the conduct of the revenue collectors of the maharaja, "that the resistance charged upon them as a crime" Farmer came to see as "the natural consequence of licentious power exerted beyond human sufferance."<sup>2</sup> He proved that the young zamindar of Chota-Nagpur, fallen under the guidance of selfish and very profligate non-tribal servants (vakils or diwan etc. who claimed that the maharaja had a right to collect his revenue direct from the people of Tamar in any way he liked), wanted to cow the bhuinhars of Tamar into paying much more than was stipulated by custom.<sup>3</sup> Setting aside the authority of the raja of Tamar, these rapacious servants of the maharaja had seized the tenants' cattle, burnt their villages, and even threatened them with further vengeance.<sup>4</sup> As soon as Farmer had become aware of the real causes of the unrest, and had taken to conciliatory methods exempting the people "from arbitrary exactions",<sup>5</sup> he was able quickly to bring the campaign to an end, the tribal people tamely submitting.

Moreover, once Farmer began to question the correctness of the reports and to pursue his own investigations, he

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1. S. Farmer to Ramgarh collector, 15 May 1793, Beng. Rev. Cons. 38 of 9 Aug. 1793 (53<sub>5</sub>)

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Farmer to M. Leslie, 27 May 1793, Beng. Rev. Cons. 26 of 18 Oct. 1793 (53<sub>7</sub>)

5. Beng. Rev. Cons. 38 of 9 Aug. 1793 (53<sub>5</sub>)



uncovered a whole series of other outrages and abuses. Thus in Rahi he found that the servants of the maharaja had set aside the authority of Narendra Sahi, the raja of the pargana, and had robbed the ryots of their cattle.<sup>1</sup> The murder of twenty people by the raja of Bundu had been hushed up by bribes to the maharaja and his officials. In the subordinate rajadom of Silli, bribes to the servants of the maharaja had enabled an uncle to oust the real heir to the pargana and seize it for himself.<sup>2</sup>

The policy of indirect rule through the hinduized maharaja and his chiefs, it is clear, had proved to be a curse for the tribal people of this area. The sadr station of the <sup>d</sup> District was situated far away at Chatra and the magistrate seldom visited the area personally because of the unhealthiness of the climate and the turbulence of the people. The state of affairs was very well described later: "no police had been hitherto established in Chootah Nagpore and the authority of the Courts was very imperfectly maintained. Whatever power the Magistrate could exercise was made use of by the Rajah [Maharaja] to oppress any who opposed his will, whilst his creatures and dependants [rajas, jagirdars and diwans] were upheld in any act of oppression they might commit and

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1. Beng. Rev. Cons. 26 of 18 Oct. 1793 (53) ; Des Lal ~~des~~ Munda, one of the rebel leaders, paid his dues and said that the only crime committed by his family was the saving of "a little money" which "the Nagpoor collector (vakil) wanted to rob."
  2. Ibid. Also, Petition, Narain Singh, heir of Silli, Beng. Rev. Cons. 57 of 11 Apl. 1794. (53)

protected from the consequences."<sup>1</sup> Even when the Ramgarh authorities proposed some action against the maharaja, the Government rejected it on the ground that he was "only nominally subject to their authority", and that the situation of that part of the country was peculiar.<sup>2</sup> The proposals<sup>3</sup> to move the sadr station from distant Chatra to Hazaribagh was similarly turned down. No wonder, therefore, that Chota-Nagpur became "a receptacle for murderers, robbers, and all breakers of peace, vagabonds &ca."<sup>4</sup>

The oppressed tribal peasantry, therefore, had no other means of ventilating their grievances than through unrest. But every time the people revolted the maharaja and his non-tribal henchmen gave to the Chatra authorities an exaggerated account of the trouble, and every time troops were marched against the rebels.<sup>5</sup> In Silli, Hajam Banta and Palma, Tamar, Rahi, Barwa and other disturbed pockets between 1797 and 1799

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1. J. Thomason's note, 12 Apl. 1832, Para. 21, B.C. 1363/54227. In 1794 the maharaja justified the action of the raja of Bundu as a retaliation by 'blood for blood' and he showed his inability to apprehend him: Petition, Deonath Sahi, N.D. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 27 of 6 June 1794. ( $\frac{128}{12}$ )
  2. Resolution, Govt., Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 28 of 6 June 1794 ( $\frac{128}{12}$ )
  3. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 12 of 20 June 1794 ( $\frac{128}{12}$ ) ; 6 of 8 Aug. 1794 ( $\frac{128}{13}$ ) ; 30 of 29 Aug. 1799 ( $\frac{128}{42}$ ) ; Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 20 May 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )
  4. W. Hunter to Govt. 13 July 1793, Para. 3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 24 of 18 Oct. 1793 ( $\frac{53}{7}$ )
  5. cf. Capt. R. Simond to R. Abercrombey. C. in C., 31 March 1795, Beng. Rev. Cons. 21 of 17 Apl. 1795 ( $\frac{53}{29}$ )

the loss of life and property was considerable.<sup>1</sup> In the first the unrest was primarily due to a family feud, in the second to the imposition of an outsider (Radhanath, probably the diwan of the maharaja) as its auction-purchaser, and in others to the different types of oppressions we have described. The disturbances in Pachet, Patkum and other neighbouring parganas against the sale - laws of the Government gave encouragement to these tribal protesters, but their real grievances were local in origin, the oppressions and injustices perpetrated by Radhanath and Basantlal, the managers of the maharaja. Even when these oppressions were proved (as in the case of Dukin Sahay munda in Burwa) the Ramgarh authorities could not take any action because the maharaja had "absolute authority with respect to the internal Regulation of his own country",<sup>2</sup> and he had "never seen an European" and declared "his determination of never doing it."<sup>3</sup>

After 1800, with the abolition of the Ramgarh collectorship, and the removal of the sazawal from Chota-Nagpur, things

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 24 Nov. 1797 ( $\frac{128}{34}$ ) ; 6 of 8 Dec. 1797 ( $\frac{128}{34}$ ) ;

6 and 7 of 6 Feb. 1798 ( $\frac{128}{36}$ ) ; 16 of 25 July 1799 ( $\frac{128}{42}$ )

In Barwa detachments of troops were repeatedly sent to cow the jagirdars in submitting to the maharaja, but without success: Ramgarh collector to Board, 31 Dec. 1799, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 22 of 26 Jan. 1826 ( $\frac{137}{38}$ )

2. J. Miller, Ramgarh magistrate, to Govt. 18 Oct. 1799, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 19 of 24 Oct. 1799 ( $\frac{128}{44}$ )

3. W. Hunter, Ramgarh collector, to Board, 26 Sept. 1798, Para. 15, Beng. Rev. Cons. 2 of 12 Oct. 1798 ( $\frac{53}{58}$ )

became worse. Now, the diwan, the sheristadar, the mohurir and other non-tribal subordinate officers of the maharaja and of the chatra court connived to oppress the tribal people, and did so with impunity.

In 1801 the maharaja and his agents effected the treacherous and cruel murder of the raja of Barwa, thus rendering ineffectual "the protection accorded to this person by the chief local officers of Government (Col. Jones of the Ramgarh battalion and Magistrate Smith).<sup>1</sup> After 1804 Tori also was disturbed because of the interference of the maharaja. In 1806 the widow of the late raja of Tori was attacked, and a crisis was only averted by the timely march of troops, and the reference of the matter to the court.<sup>2</sup>

The weaker tribal peasants, however, could not even go to the court. Those who did, were disillusioned at Chatra. Blunt, the Acting magistrate of Ramgarh, rightly pointed out in 1806, "All persons, therefore, having any complaints to prefer are compelled however great the distance to repair to Chittra [Chatra] for redress[;] and it must frequently happen that the peon deputed by the court for the apprehension of the persons complained against returns without having been successful. The prosecutor is [thus] reduced to the necessity, [either] of foregoing any further attempt to obtain redress or to incur the expense of using a second time the same

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1. Capt. Roughsedge's report, quoted in Reid, Ranchi Settlement Report, Para. 38.

2. J. Thomason's note, 12 Apl. 1832, Para. 21. B.C.1363/54227.

process with no better prospect of success. On the other hand should the peon deputed by the court have succeeded in apprehending the persons complained against, it is [as] frequently happens that the prosecutor wearied out with attendance, has previously returned to his home, and is not forthcoming."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the coming of the British rule over this area, with its courts to enforce complex regulations, its magistrates ignorant of the local language and custom, and its non-tribal amlas (subordinate staff) open to corruption, meant the wholesale ruin of the tribal peasantry. "The poor man in the prosecution of a suit having no presents to give, and worn out by litigation and chicanery, at length became obliged to yield it up; there was in fact no law at all for him; and the Omla being well practised in their vocation had all their proceedings veiled, as at the present day, in profound secrecy."<sup>2</sup>

To improve the law and order situation in Chota-Nagpur, the Government, at the request of Blunt, sanctioned the introduction of the zamindari police under Regulation XVIII, 1805, and a sanad was offered to the maharaja for his acceptance.<sup>3</sup> He wavered for some time, but even when he accepted it in July 1807, nothing could be done for some time, probably due to the

1. W.Blunt to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 8 Apl. 1806, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 25 of 26 Jan. 1826. (<sup>137</sup>/<sub>38</sub>)

2. Drummond, op.cit. 83.

3. Thomason's note, 12 Apl. 1832, Para.22, B.C.1363/54227.

family feud between the maharaja and his brothers.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary at this point to say a few words about the feud, for not only did it delay the introduction of the new police system, but it was itself the occasion of various crimes and acts of oppression. The original feud was over the division of the inheritance, the making of maintenance grants to the younger brothers<sup>2</sup> etc., but it was complicated by the maharaja's taking part in a similar dispute over the pargana of Udaipur to which there were two claimants, one of them, Dukhan (Dukani?) Sahi being supported by the maharaja, the other by the maharaja's brothers. The prime mover in these disputes and in the resulting violence was the maharaja's diwan, Dindayal Nath, <sup>a</sup>~~an~~ Kayastha.<sup>3</sup> There was almost universal complaint about the man's undue influence over the maharaja, but as Thomason records, "in accordance with the oath of the

1. Ibid. Para. 21. In March 1806 Maharaja Deonath Sahi died, and was succeeded by his son Govind nath Sahi, a young man of 25, who got a khillat from the commandant of the Ramgarh Battalion on the occasion of his installation.
2. In his petition [recd. 2 May 1808, Beng. Rev. Cons. 11 of 22 July 1808 (55)  
13] Maharaja Govind nath Sahi stated that after the death of maharaja Deonath Sahi, he, being the eldest born, succeeded to the estate, and "in conformity to the usage of the family," his younger brothers Gopinath Sahi and Mangee Lal got some parganas as jagir; but they were not ready to pay the revenue fixed at Rs.4,000 and 3,000 Rs. respectively. Moreover, Gopinath, while trying to "take forcible possession" of five more parganas, had collected a large force, attacked Numda pargana, imprisoned and harassed the renters, beat the sazawal and other officials of the maharaja and driven them away.
3. Both these cases went to the Chatra Court, and Radanath, the dismissed diwan, worked against the maharaja in both.

family [not to see any British officer] the Rajah [maharaja] continued to preserve his invisibility and thus there was little check upon Deen Dial who affixed his master's seal to whatever orders it suited his purpose to issue."<sup>1</sup>

Whenever any reference was made to the Government, they advised the Ramgarh authorities to maintain the party in possession and to refer the complaint to the civil court. But the maharaja by his own power and authority, dispossessed any party opposed to himself or his diwan, and then referred the injured party to the civil court, knowing full well that the process of redress there was tardy, and out of the reach of the simple tribal folk. (If perchance the decision was adverse to his claims, he looked to circumstances and chance for his revenge.) An injured party could not prove possession, but when they pleaded previous possession, and the recent outrage on them, their opponents, supported by the diwan, totally rejected these claims. Very often, indeed, the defendants refused to appear in the court, and derided the attempts of the magistrate to enforce the civil process against them.<sup>2</sup>

While the diwan's power was unchallenged there could be no hope of redress. Worse still, the failure of the Company's court to ascertain the truth, or if ascertained, to act upon it and enforce their decision led to a hatred of that court by those whom it had failed to protect. In the winter of 1808-09

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1. J. Thomason's note, 12 Apl. 1832, Para.25, B.C.1363/59227.

2. Ibid. Para.25.

it was decided therefore to end an intolerable situation, and Roughsedge marched into Chota-Nagpur with his troops. Din Dayal fled to Calcutta where he was apprehended and put on his trial, and the maharaja, when detached from his evil genius, paid his arrears and submitted his disputes to arbitration.<sup>1</sup>

The zamindari police were now introduced in this area on 4 June 1809 after the declaration of a general amnesty.<sup>2</sup> But from the start it seemed unlikely to succeed. The maharaja was totally averse to a measure which involved him in the expense of five thanas, later six, an expense of Rs.5,400 and one which tended to keep him continually embroiled with the magistrate if their pay was not punctually discharged or his orders readily enforced.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, while Regulation XVIII of 1805 contemplated the employment of no other than the indigenous village police (e.g. ghatwals, goraits, etc.) under the mundas and mankis "here was introduced a new and very expensive machinery, the very titles of which would not be acceptable to the people, and which could not be otherwise than offensive to the Rajah."<sup>4</sup> In the words of Drummond, "here was an extensive establishment of Darogahs, Jemadars and Mohurirs with all the other paraphernalia attached to this licensed banditti."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid. Paras. 27-28.

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 2 Feb. 1810. ( $\frac{130}{12}$ ). Din Dayal also was released, vide Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 14 & 15 of 5 July 1814 ( $\frac{131}{41}$ )

3. Thomason's Note, 12 Apl. 1832, Para. 29, : B.C.1363/54227: Radhanath Panda, his former diwan, was instigating the maharaja to thwart it.

4. Ibid. Para. 32.

5. Drummond, op.cit. 96.



Naturally, therefore, neither were oppressions checked nor disturbances averted. In 1810 Barwa<sup>1</sup> and Tamar<sup>2</sup> were seriously disturbed. Between 1811 and 1813, the tribal people of Nawagarh under Buktour Sahi and Mandal Singh threw such a challenge to the authorities that even the Ramgarh battalion had to suffer a defeat.<sup>3</sup> Even though the Ramgarh authorities realized that these disturbances were due to the continued oppressions perpetrated on the peasantry by their chiefs,<sup>4</sup> they persisted in employing troops, presumably for the sake of prestige.

The new police of Chota-Nagpur, which so evidently failed to bring order, was invariably criticised in this

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 10 of 23 May 1817. Roughsedge admitted the inefficiency of the police in this pargana: Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 79 of 19 Jan. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{11}$ )

2. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 8 of 14 Sept. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{21}$ ) ; 28, 29 & 30 of 13 Nov. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{23}$ ) ;  
3 of 24 Oct. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{22}$ ) ; 1, 2 & 4 of 24 Oct. 1810 ( $\frac{130}{22}$ ).

The leader of the Tamar revolt, Raghunath Singh, was imprisoned for life. The following episode connected with his conviction is worth noting: When the officer commanding in Tamar reported to the Ramgarh magistrate that the disturbances which had occurred were entirely due to the oppression of the Tamar raja on his vassal, "Raghunath went to the Court then sitting at Chatra. 'The evidence kept in readiness against him by the Tamarh zamindar caused his committal to the court of circuit, and the result was his condemnation to transportation or imprisonment for life.'" Vide Dalton, Ethnology, 170.

3. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 20 of 27 Jan. 1812 ( $\frac{130}{44}$ ) ; 39 of 21 March 1812 ( $\frac{130}{47}$ )

4. cf. Acting Magt. Ramgarh to Govt., 5 Sept. 1810, Para. 4, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 6 of 14 Sept. 1810. ( $\frac{130}{21}$ ) ; The Tamar raja attempted to raise the quit-rent, "and even endeavoured to dispossess some of the Mankees and Moondas, who have been obliged to have recourse to arms in defence of their possession.."

period.<sup>1</sup> But strangely enough, it was never realized that their inefficiency was due to the employment of outsiders as police officers. The mixture of the daroga system and the zamindari system of police had made the situation anomalous. The tribal watchmen (e.g. the gorais and ghatwals), who had always obeyed their own chiefs, did not feel inclined to obey the non-tribal, greedy and corrupt darogas and jamadars. They had, moreover, a particular hatred against the barkandazes attached to the thanas.

It was never realized by the authorities that "a man ought to know the turnings, windings and intricacies of his own house better than a stranger to it" and that "the peculiarities of any country must be much better known to those who have been born and reared on it than to strangers or those of recent importation."<sup>2</sup> Drummond rightly points out, "It is also obvious that the village and indigenous people by the possession of such knowledge, would be enabled to overcome physical obstacles and avoid impediments which to strangers might seem impossible."<sup>3</sup>

The only step taken to improve the situation was the annual tour in Chota-Nagpur and other jungle parganas to be under-

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 4 Apl. 1812 ( $\frac{130}{46}$ ) ; 2 of 3 March 1812 ( $\frac{130}{46}$ ) ;

9 and 38 of 23 May 1817 ( $\frac{132}{58}$ ) ; 39 of 29 July 1817 ( $\frac{132}{61}$ )

2. Drummond, op.cit. Chapter V.

3. Ibid.

taken by the Ramgarh magistrate from 1817.<sup>1</sup> But this casual visit, with a large establishment, did not check the oppressive conduct of the landholders and subordinate officers, nor did it secure discipline and effectiveness in the zamindari police.

Late in 1818, a woman named Adhar Dai and her family were murdered by the barkandazes of the Chota-Nagpur maharaja on the suspicion that she was a witch and that she had harmed the children of the maharaja. Though the fact of murder was proved early in 1819, no one came forward to depose against the maharaja.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after this, the Mundas of Tamar rose en masse under their two leaders, the two mundas Rudun and Kunta.<sup>3</sup>

1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 9 and 11 of 23 May 1817 (132) ;  
34 of 2 Dec. 1817 (133)  
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It was laid down that there should be an annual tour. But the main reason for avoiding the constant presence of an European officer in Chota-Nagpur was the fear of an unhealthy climate: G. French, Ramgarh Magistrate, to H. Douglas & others, Judges of the Court of Circuit, 10 Apl. 1817, Para.11, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 9 of 23 May 1817. (132)  
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2. B.C. 746/20327 : Reports of Jan. to Apl. 1819: The maharaja's son and daughter died of fever and small pox in July 1818 and in Aug. or Sept. the murder was committed. But the Ramgarh magistrate only began investigations in January 1819.
3. E. Roughsedge to G. French, Magistrate of Ramgarh, 2 Nov. 1819, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 35 of 10 March 1820 (134)  
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Troops were employed for several months,<sup>1</sup> but the leaders, who first took refuge in the jungle and then in Singhbhum, could only be apprehended with the help of the Singhbhum chiefs. Colvin, the Magistrate of the jungle Mahals, and Roughsedge remained busy in Tamar for several months. The immediate cause of the rising was found to be the superstition of the people and their desire to lay hold of one Tribhuvan Manjhi<sup>h</sup> and others whom they accused of preventing the rainfall through their magical powers.<sup>2</sup> But the insurgents were also found to be conniving with the brother of Raghunath Singh of Sindri, the leader of 1810 rising, whose family had been dispossessed of its jagir of Chaurasi.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 28 of 24 March 1820 (<sup>134</sup>/<sub>18</sub>) ; the inaccessibility of this area was proved beyond doubt: "the only paths from village to village in this wonderfully strong country, hinder it in marching impossible to avoid Ghauts or passes which are keys to some man's possessions and he at once resists or flies to his Coora, on the appearance of an armed body": Roughsedge to Colvin, 2 March 1820, Ibid.  
 Moreover, most of the insurgents were found to be "solely actuated by the blind obedience which the lower classes of the inhabitants of the pergunna are in the habit of paying to their immediate superiors" [the mundas and mankis]: Colvin to Roughsedge, 29 Feb. 1820, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 36 of 10 March 1820 (<sup>134</sup>/<sub>18</sub>)
  2. Colvin to Govt., 16 Jan. 1820, Para.7, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 39 of 4 Feb. 1820 (<sup>134</sup>/<sub>16</sub>)
  3. Ibid. Para. 10.  
 Raghunath, a mahton (a superior manki) was still in jail, and his brother, for whose apprehension a reward had been offered by the Magistrate in 1813, was still at large. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 9 of 8 Feb. 1820 (<sup>134</sup>/<sub>16</sub>) ; Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 8 June 1821 (<sup>134</sup>/<sub>53</sub>). Though an amin had investigated the <sup>la</sup>caims of the raja and the mahto, and the diwani adalat had decided the matter in former's favour in Jan. 1817, the tribal people were not satisfied.

In the affrays that took place, several people were killed, and many houses were burnt. At last Dukhit, Sugun and other leaders, who surrendered, were pardoned.<sup>1</sup> Rudun and Kunta, after their apprehension, suffered imprisonment.

These two events - the murder in Chota-Nagpur proper and the Tamar disturbance - proved beyond doubt that the control of the British authorities over these areas was only nominal. Now it was realized that a closer supervision was necessary. Colvin<sup>2</sup> who had been specially deputed to investigate the causes of the Tamar disturbances and Fleming the magistrate, both put forward the same view.<sup>3</sup> In April 1821, therefore, S.T.Cuthbert was appointed the judge and Magistrate of Ramgarh and in June W.Smith was appointed the Register of the <sup>&</sup> District

1. Govt. to Colvin, 4 Feb. 1820, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 43 of 4 Feb. 1820 ( $\frac{134}{16}$ )
2. In his long report to the Govt. of 10 Apl. 1821, Paras. 53 to 63, (Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 8 June 1821, ( $\frac{134}{53}$ )) he discussed the nature of the tribal people and the control of the maharaja and his subordinate rajas over them. He criticised the levy of Rs. 300 on these rajas by the maharaja for the maintenance of a tahsildar and the mismanagement of the police at his hands. Still he admitted "no thana Establishment, however large, would be sufficient to inforce [sic] the processes of the Magistrate in many parts of the Pergunnah (for instance the southern and western parts of Tamar) or even to effect the apprehensions of common offenders amongst the hills and jungles to which they have resort and ... the only police which is adapted for that part of the country is the zemeendaree." Like the mundas and mankis of Patkum and Bagmundi, in the Jungle Mahals, he wanted their counterparts in Chota-Nagpur also to be responsible for law and order. At the same time he was in favour of the overall control of the maharaja and the rajas with a closer supervision of the district authorities over them.
3. Resolution of Govt., Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 18 of 8 June 1821 - ( $\frac{134}{53}$ )

and Joint magistrate and assistant collector in Chota-Nagpur.<sup>1</sup> It was expected that Smith would visit the area once a year in a favourable season, would establish a more vigilant superintendence over its affairs, and would submit to Government some proposals for the improvement of the police.<sup>2</sup> As ill luck could have it, W. Smith died a few months later in October 1821, and N. Smith took his office.

In the decade 1821 to 1831 N. Smith and later Cuthbert, both of whom had a knack of making experiments, tried by various methods to secure the full enforcement of the regulations in Chota-Nagpur. Thus in 1822, during a tour of Chota-Nagpur, Smith chanced to see some stills, and he recommended that the excise tax should be extended to the area.<sup>3</sup> Next year he wrote to the Government that the road cess (rahdari) should be collected. The Government agreed to introduce the excise system, but abolished rahdari altogether.

There was much opposition to the new excise duties, both from the maharaja and the people. But Smith made light of it: "it may be necessary to premise that the same farce will be acted over again as on a former occasion. We shall be told that the kols are going back to Rohitasgarh; that the pargana

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1. By Regulation I of 1817 the authority of the Commissioner of Bihar and Benares had already been extended to this area. The maharaja of Chota-Nagpur had also been divested of his police power and a native superintendent of police appointed in Chota-Nagpur in 1819. Moreover, the collectorship of Ramgarh had been revived.
  2. Memorandum of Judl. Secy. Shakespear, 20 Jan. 1826, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 31 of 26 Jan. 1826 ( $\frac{137}{39}$ )
  3. Reid, Ranchi Settlement Report, Para. 43; Also see S. T. Cuthbert to Govt. 15 Apl. 1830, Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 25 May 1830 ( $\frac{61}{60}$ )

will fall into decay; that the public revenue will likely be endangered, nay, more than this, thousands of kols will probably at the last extremity appear at Chatra, peaceably to gubrau and dumkau [Dhamkau or threaten] the authorities"<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly official distilleries were set up, operated by non-tribal farmers of the excise. These distilleries, which spread the use of spirits, brought degradation among the tribal people and the influx of the non-tribal excise-farmers led to their harassment. Moreover, this prepared the ground for a tax on the milder, much less injurious and more nutritious pachai or hanria (rice-beer) brewed by the tribal people for their own consumption.

The tribal people felt the innovation very keenly, the more so because of the oppressions of the excise-farmer. In 1825 they arrived in large bodies at the sadr station and lodged numerous complaints against Karam Ali, the thikadar of abkari in Chota-Nagpur. On enquiry, Cuthbert found that the thikadar had "sent his Myrmidons into every part of the pergunnah, making the people enter into engagements with him, wholly disproportionate to their means, thereby threatening the pergunnah with general misery and distress."<sup>2</sup> The greedy

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1. Reid, op.cit. Para. 43.

2. S.T.Cuthbert to Board, C.P. 11 Jan. 1826, Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 7 Sept. 1826 (61) : In 1825 the thikadar let the pargana of Busea (1) (84 villages) to Lohar Singh Baraik at Rs. 300, but in 1826 he himself collected more than Rs.1,200 from 36 villages. Now he was coercing the mahton and pahan of the villages to pay him at the rate of one Rupee per home, and on their not agreeing to this, he maltreated them.

foreigners who took excise farms, associated the non-tribal police daroga and the munsiff of the pargana in the lease to get their support in the act of extortion. Cuthbert very aptly remarked, "It must come home to the mind of a child, that farming out the Abkarry to a stranger in such a Pergunnah must necessarily give rise to abuses which the strictest surveill-<sup>1</sup>ance on the part of the collector will not altogether prevent."

Soon W.R. Gilbert, the political Agent of the Governor-General on the south-west frontier, was reporting that as a result of the tax on hanria, a flourishing hamlet in Barwa had become a jungle with a herd of wild buffaloes and tigers in the course of only two to three years. The tribal people of several villages had emigrated to a man, and large tracts of fertile land were now lying waste.<sup>2</sup> The nazir of Ramgarh also found many houses deserted in Chota-Nagpur as a result of this taxation.<sup>3</sup> In 1826 Cuthbert strongly recommended the

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1. Ibid.

2. Gilbert to Cuthbert, 20 July 1826, Beng. Rev. Cons. 47 of 7 Sept. 1826 ( $\frac{61}{1}$ ) : "Three-fourths of the cultivators of Chota-Nagpore ( $\frac{61}{1}$ ) are of that tribe of Coles called Dhanghars [sic], and that it is on these industrious people alone the Handee [sic] tax falls."

3. Cuthbert to Board, 29 July 1826, Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 7 Sept. 1826 ( $\frac{61}{1}$ ) : Method of preparing hanria :- Roots of certain trees were "mixed with rice, and then steeped in water and this mixture by being exposed a certain number of days to the sun produces a beverage of a spiritous quality; it is manufactured by the Dhanghars and Coles in their own houses, and [may] be termed a kind of domestic brewery necessary for the health and support of the lower orders in a climate uncongenial even to the natives."



abolition of this tax.<sup>1</sup> Now it became clear how far from the mark had been Smith's scoffing remark of 1822. At last, at the recommendation of the Board of Revenue<sup>2</sup> this tax was abolished.<sup>3</sup>

For a few years, only the general Abkari was levied in Chota-Nagpur.<sup>4</sup> Then in 1830 Cuthbert proposed that a house tax on account of the home brewing of these tribal people should be levied. He saw "no reason why the people of Chota Nagpore should be exempt from it, indeed I am of opinion that even the lower orders should be made to pay, for they are great drunkards, and cases have not been unfrequent lately, in

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1. Ibid: Method of Settlement and oppression:- "On a person receiving a lease from the Thecadar he sends his Peadas into the different villages within his division, these his people immediately summon before them, the Mahtoon or head Ryot, get from him the number of houses in the village, and the number of residents in each house when they make the settlement of the village by laying a tax on every home varying from 8 annas to one Rupee 8 annas; a putta is then furnished to the Mahtoon and a Kuboolent taken from him and the inhabitants are called upon to pay down one half year's rent which they have generally been compelled to do, and in many instances without receiving receipts; moreover independent of the tax, money is extorted from them in the shape of Tulhana, salary &ca &ca, besides which they have to provide entertainment for the Peadas. Some of the Kutkenads have in this manner, put into their pockets four times the amount of what they have paid for their lease."

2. Beng. Rev. Cons. 45 of 7 Sept. 1826 ( $\frac{61}{1}$ )

3. Beng. Rev. Cons. 47 of 7 Sept. 1826 ( $\frac{61}{1}$ )

4. Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 25 May 1830 ( $\frac{61}{60}$ ) : Rs. 9122-10 in that year.

which people have lost their lives in drunken brawls."<sup>1</sup> Thus was introduced the house tax which nullified the salutary effect of the abolition of the hanria tax.

Another grave mistake of Cuthbert was the introduction of poppy cultivation. In 1827 he complained that this had not yet been attempted by the opium agent, "though there are many parts of the Pergunnah in which it might perhaps be successfully introduced."<sup>2</sup> Later, in 1830, he reported with pleasure that since 1828 he had doubled the yield of opium in the district.<sup>3</sup> There was opposition to the new crop, but he dismissed it. The unwillingness of the peasantry was described by him in the following words almost as lightly as Smith had dismissed their opposition to the excise tax: "The introduction of a new branch of agriculture amongst the natives is always attended with infinite trouble and it will be some time before the husbundry [sic] of Chotanagpore will be spirited enough to convert any great proportion of land to this valuable cultivation."<sup>4</sup> He admitted at the same time that the

1. Cuthbert to Govt. 15 Apl. 1830, Para.34, Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 25 May 1830 ( $\frac{61}{60}$ ) : He proposed that 404,584 houses in 2,636 villages ( $\frac{61}{60}$ ) of Chotanagpur should be assessed at five annas per annum, yielding 12,663 Rupees, an excess of about three thousand rupees on the existing returns from the stills.
2. Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para.49, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 ( $\frac{138}{22}$ ) : He also wanted the management of opium production of the district in his hands.
3. Cuthbert to Govt., 15 Apl. 1830, Para.37, Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 25 May 1830 ( $\frac{61}{60}$ )
4. Ibid.

rural economy of the pargana and the lack of irrigation facilities were the two factors responsible for the opposition of the people to this cultivation.<sup>1</sup>

Some useful points were no doubt made in this period by both Smith and Cuthbert. The former on 19 June 1823 wrote that the turbulence of the people in this area was sufficiently indicative of the hostility of the people to the judicial system by which they were governed: "It is upon the system itself, as inapplicable to these parts, that I would cast all the odium implied in my position."<sup>2</sup>

Cuthbert, adverting to the "distinct and uncivilized race of people" inhabiting this area - "a people differing in manners, customs and language from the inhabitants of other parts of the country", urged that they should be governed by "a system of jurisprudence adapted to their actual condition and circumstances."<sup>3</sup> All the tribal hilly areas here, he suggested, might be placed under the management and superintendence of an able and experienced commissioner, assisted by about four assistants, possibly military gentlemen, acquainted with this area.<sup>4</sup>

About the police also some useful suggestions were made. On 17 July 1824 Cuthbert had opposed the idea of re-introducing the zamindari police system. But on 21 April 1827 he admitted

1. Ibid.

2. N. Smith to Govt., 19 June 1823, Para.10, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 21 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137  
38)

3. Cuthbert to Govt., 15 Feb. 1823, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 19 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137  
38)

4. Ibid.

that the non-tribal police officers had to face serious physical obstacles in this area.<sup>1</sup> Again, in 1830 he emphasized these difficulties and admitted that the non-tribal police officers "who had no natural tie to bind them to the interests of the people, who are little acquainted with the country, who go into [Chota] Nagpoor with a full conviction of the climate disagreeing with them, and of their being obliged to fly from the purgunna on the approach of the rainy season," were most unsuitable to the tasks with which they were beset.<sup>2</sup> But without realizing the real problem, he decided to invest all the jagirdars with police powers, and at the same time to retain a part of the official police.

Though Cuthbert admitted in 1827 that ghatwals still collected rahdari (road-cess) from the traders, though it had been prohibited, he added, "A personal experience of the length and steepness of these defiles convinced me that no regular police could possibly afford protection to people travelling through passes which give such facility to robbers and whose escape is so easy and detection so difficult." He was convinced that the ghatwals were "the natural and indeed the only<sup>3</sup> effectual guardians of travellers in such places," and that if they were "deprived of the customary remuneration,

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1. Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para.76, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138); He admitted that no <sup>Eur-</sup> officer had visited <sup>opean</sup> (22) the pargana for a period of about seven years.
  2. Drummond, op.cit. Chapter VI.
  3. Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para.92, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138) (22)

instead of being the guardians of the public peace, they might become its assailers."<sup>1</sup> Still the Government did not do anything to restore the legality of the road-cess or to abolish the official police altogether.

Another useful proposal turned down by the Government was to move the sadr station nearer to Chota-Nagpur from Chatra to Hazaribagh.<sup>2</sup> The Board of revenue was also in favour of Hazaribagh, but the Government preferred the view of the Patna Provincial Court and the sadr station was fixed at Sherghati, further still from Chota-Nagpur. Thus this area was left all the more at the mercy of rapacious non-tribal adventurers, subordinate officers and others, and the faggots were ready for lighting in 1831.

Kolhan, Saraikela, Kharsawan and Porhat (Singhbhum):-

Singhbhum, the home of the Hos or Larka Kols, was defined in 1821 as being bounded on the north-west and north by Chota-Nagpur and Tamar, on the north by Patkum, to the east by Barabhum and Dhalbhum, to the south-east by Bamanghati, to the south by Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, to the south-west by Bonai, and to the west by Gangpur and Chota-Nagpur.<sup>3</sup> On all sides it was defended and enclosed by rocky hills and dense jungles.

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1. Ibid. Para.92.

2. Both Smith and Cuthbert made this proposal. Courts were held alternately at Chatra and Sherghati: Cuthbert to Govt., 6 March 1824, Beng. Rev. Cons. 12 of 2 Apl. 1824 ( $\frac{60}{5}$ )

3. Roughsedge to Lt. Col . Richards, 2 Apl. 1821, Para.3, Home Misc. No.724.

On the south in particular the hills formed a continuous barrier, (Saranda pir or pargana was picturesquely called Saranda of the seven hundred hills),<sup>1</sup> all clothed in forest. There were two main divisions of the area - Kolhan, the main home of the Hos, a tract of open undulating country some sixty miles from north to south and thirty five to sixty miles in breadth, and to the north the tributary estates, sometimes called Singhbhum proper, "fine, open arable land," above forty five miles from east to west and eighteen miles from north to south.<sup>2</sup> The two areas were divided by the river Sanjai. Thanks to the inland position of Singhbhum, and the barrier of hills which intercepts monsoon winds blowing up from the south-east, the climate is peculiarly dry.<sup>3</sup> All the rivers - the Subarnarekha, Baitarni, Brahmani and Sanjai - are fordable throughout the year, except for the few hours after rain, when they rise and then fall suddenly.<sup>4</sup> There are extensive and very fine sal forests, and in parts of Kolhan scrub jungles of palas and asun, famous in the early 19th century for their production of tussore silk.<sup>5</sup>

Within this wild and rugged country, walled in by hills and covered by dense patches of jungle, the Hos successfully maintained their independence, "their military prowess earning for them the sobriquet of Larka Kols, i.e. the fighting kols"<sup>6</sup>

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1. D.G.Singhbhum, 5.

2. Lt. Tickell, 'The Hodesum', J.A.S.B. IX, Part.II, 1840.

3. D.G.Singhbhum, 19.

4. Ibid. 5.

5. Lt. Tickell, op.cit. Silk was manufactured at Saraikela, Bankura and Midnapur.

6. D.G.Singhbhum, 26.

Several attempts had been made to subjugate them - such as the formidable, but abortive attacks of the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur, assisted by the Raja of Porahat, about the middle of the 18th century, by the latter again in 1770 and by the zamindar (the Mahapater) of Bamanghati in 1800.<sup>1</sup> All the attacks were repulsed by the Hos, who retaliated by frequent raids into the territories of their neighbours. Kolhan was thus jealously guarded from any incursions of outsiders - not even the pilgrims bound for Jagannath (Puri) in Orissa being permitted to pass through. "A traveller would as soon think of venturing into a tyger's [sic] den as of traversing any part of Lurka Coles."<sup>2</sup> In the tributary estates of Porahat, Khar-sawan and Saraik<sup>el</sup>da some non-tribal people did infiltrate and settle, but in Kolhan only the herdsmen (gwalas) carpenters (kamars) and some other artisan castes, whose skills the Hos required, were allowed an entry.<sup>3</sup> As Dunbar commented in 1861, "it appears to have been their constant aim to keep themselves as distinct from other tribes as possible, and with the exception of a few low caste Hindoos, such as those inhabiting Jugernathpore, these districts are possessed by Coles alone."<sup>4</sup>

The Hos were part hunters, part agriculturists, though

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1. E. Roughsedge to Govt., 9 May 1820, Paras. 16-17, Home Misc. No. 724.
  2. Ibid. Para. 15.
  3. Ibid.: they had no veneration for Brahmans and cows, and no Brahman, Rajput or Musalman could be found in their well-inhabited villages. The artisans were tolerated as they provided them with cloth, pots, ghee etc. and acted as their interpreters and accountants.
  4. W. Dunbar, 'Some observations', J.R.A.S. of G.B. & Ireland, XVIII, Dalton, Bradley Birt and several others emphasise this point.

until the British penetration of the area it was not realised<sup>1</sup> just how much open land was under cultivation within Singhbhum. They were noted hunters - of all the tribal people of the Chota-Nagpur area theirs were the heaviest game-bags - and excellent archers. "From childhood they practise archery; every lad herding cattle or watching crops makes this his sole pastime; and skill is attained even in knocking over small birds with blunt arrows."<sup>2</sup> To this, Tickell thought, was due their fine physique - the use of the bow, even in childhood, expanding the chest, their pursuit of game over steep and rugged hills bringing "their lower limbs into a state of training which the best 'Phulwan' [wrestler] of the plains of India might envy."<sup>3</sup> With physical strength went zest and courage: "The pluck of the Hos displayed in their first encounter with our troops and former wars, I have seen exemplified", wrote Dalton, "on minor occasions. In competitive games they go to work with a will, and a strenuous exertion of their full force, unusual in natives of India."<sup>4</sup> Tuckey, writing in 1920, likewise commented upon their independence, good

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1. Roughsedge in 1820 described his wonder at the amount of cultivated land. "The mind is so accustomed to associate with the idea of predatory and lawless tribes, their resistance in the fastnesses and in the strongholds of woods and mountains that it was with difficulty I could bring myself to believe that the smiling hamlets in view contained, inhabitants so ferocious and sanguinary as we found them to be." The Hos were living rather luxuriously, their villages abounding in sheep, goats, fowls and pigs. Roughsedge to Govt. 9 May 1820, Paras. 17-18, Home Misc. No.724.

2. Dalton, Ethnology, 195.

3. Lt. Tickell, op.cit.

4. Ethnology, 206.



spirits and smiling faces, and the high position of their women,<sup>1</sup> while Dalton commented upon such traits as "a manner free from servility, but never rude, a love, or at least the practice, of truth, a feeling of self-respect..."<sup>2</sup>

Since to strength and courage in the Hos was added a warlike temperament - Dalton noted that they were "very impulsive, easily excited to rash, headstrong action, and apt to resent imposition or oppression without reflection"<sup>3</sup> - they often proved a danger to their neighbours. The early British records are full of reports of their inroads into the neighbouring areas. In 1817 the Ramgarh Magistrate reported five predatory incursions into Sonpur, in June and July, made by parties of 60 to 80 Hos, armed with axes, spears, bows and arrows.<sup>4</sup> The attacks were made at night, and the cattle which they seized were driven to Singhbhum by the morning.

Again in 1820, Major Roughsedge, Commander of the Ramgarh Battalion and the political Agent of the Governor-General in this area, reported that "the bordering pergunnahs of Sonepore, Belreaghur [Barkagarh?] and Bussea in Chotanagpore had been ravaged by the inroads of those savages for many years past to such a degree as to cause considerable desolation and abandonment of villages."<sup>5</sup> He found more than forty

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1. Tuckey, Kolhan Settlement Report, Para.19.

2. Ethnology, 205.

3. Ibid.

4. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 39 of 29 July 1817 (132) ;  
14 of 28 Oct. 1817 (133)  
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5. Roughsedge to Govt. 9 May 1820, Para.11, Home Misc. No.724.

hamlets deserted in Sonpur in consequence of these plunders.<sup>1</sup> Usually they deported cattle, more especially buffaloes. But sometimes they attacked and destroyed whole villages, murdering all who fell into their hands. Such was the rapidity of their attack that no one could resist them.<sup>1</sup>

But the chief region of their depredations was the northern portions of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar and the north-eastern portion of Bonai in Orissa. Roughsedge found 84 villages in that area completely ravaged by these inroads. "The fine pastorage and the abundance of water in these mountains," he wrote, "render them a favorite [sic] resort of cowherds and the quantity of buffaloes carried off by the Lurkas of late years is almost incredible."<sup>2</sup> Small wonder that Roughsedge represented the Hos as "a dreadful pest to the civilized part of Singbhoom and to all the adjoint zemindars excepting Tamar, Patcoom and Burraboom where they did little comparative mischief."<sup>3</sup>

In view of such evidence it would be wrong to agree with Tickell's view that "their forays were never marked by cruelty and unnecessary violence"<sup>4</sup>. Raiding was an accepted part of their life ("Cold-blooded murder for the sake of gain, robbery, even pilfering, lying, deceit, dishonesty, even of the most venial kind," were, however, unknown and despised

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1. Ibid. Para.12.

2. Ibid. Para.13: Within a month 80 of 100 cattle seized in one case had been devoured by them.

3. Ibid. Para.14. The great barrier was the estates of Kharawan and Saraikda.

4. Lt. Tickell, op.cit.

among the Hos.)<sup>1</sup> The most common occasions for raids were either the pressure of want and famine, or more frequently the prompting of their own rulers, or even of neighbouring chiefs, who incited them to attack their enemies. Dalton and Bradley Birt comment on this latter occasion for forays. "Some of the raids on the southern districts", writes Dalton, "were undoubtedly instigated by the Singbhum Raja. It was usual indeed for these chiefs, when they wished to annoy a neighbour, to incite the Kols to make a raid on him.....Whenever there was a row, they eagerly entered into it, and all malcontents invariably sought their assistance."<sup>2</sup> Bradley Birt writes in similar vein, "They were a splendid fighting race and the Rajas made full use of them, as pawns in the game, in their quarrels with each other."<sup>3</sup> Killings of witches, killings in family feuds, which might be handed down for generations, killings in the course of raids, these were honourable enough.

It is necessary at this point to give some account of the political structure of Singbhum. The Hos were a people totally distinct from the Hindus in religion and language. In 1820 Roughsedge wrote "With the exception of four or five individuals met with on the southern borders of Lurka Cole [Kolhan] I did not find a single Cole who understood a word of the Hindoo or Oorea language."<sup>4</sup> The tribes-people cleared the land and settled it under their village headmen or mundas.

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1. Ibid.

2. Ethnology, 180.

3. Chota-Nagpore, 89.

4. Roughsedge to Govt., 9 May, Para.20, Home Misc. No.724.

The munda was obeyed "more through prescription and attachment, however, than fear, for no means of enforcing authority are apparent, the influence of character prevails here as it does not everywhere else and some headmen of villages regulate the motions of a dozen others without having any recognized or established authority over them."<sup>1</sup> The reference by Roughsedge, here, to superior headmen, is, in fact, a reference to the manki, or divisional headman, whose position has already been discussed on pages 150-152 of this chapter. As the Singhbhum Gazetteer points out, the "indigenous village system..., based upon a federal union of villages under a single divisional headman," which decayed in Chota-Nagpur proper, survived, and was preserved in Singhbhum.<sup>2</sup> The area under the divisional headman or manki, which among the Mundas was called a purha, and among the Bhumijes a taraf, was in Singhbhum called a pir. There were twentysix such pirs in the Kolhan.<sup>3</sup>

Above the mankis came various tribal chiefs or rajas. Those of Porahat, Saraikela and Kharsawan in Singhbhum proper, were respected rather than obeyed. They were said, in a local legend, to have occupied the country in the time of Akbar, and to have been associated with Raja Man Singh, the great Rajput general of the Mughal.<sup>4</sup> The main body of Hos, however, so

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1. Ibid. Para.19.

2. D.G.Singhbhum, 94-95.

3. Tickell, op.cit. Ajodya, Asantalia, Aula, Burkela, Burburia or Burwar pir, Burpeer or Jayant pir, Charai, Chainpur, Gumra, Govindpur, Gopinathpur, Jamda, Kainua, Kuldiha, Kotegarh, Lota, Natua, Labgarh, Puliong, Rajabasa, Unchdee, Rengra, Rela, Sath Buntria, Toee and Saranda. Also see A.D.Tuckey, op.cit. Para.3.

4. D.G.Singhbhum, 26.

Dalton reported, "honored [sic] and respected the Singh chiefs, but regarded them till they quarrelled rather as friends and allies than as rulers."<sup>1</sup> (Saraikela and Kharsawan, until the middle of the 17th century, had been part of Parahat, but had then been granted as fiefs to younger brothers of the Raja.)<sup>2</sup> From about 1770 the control over the tribal people of Singhbhum had been slipping from the hands of the rajas of Parahat.

This loss of control was probably occasioned by the hinduization of the rajas and thakurs. They came to claim a blood connection with the Rajput chiefs of Marwar and other states of Rajputana. The Saraikela Settlement Report thus records the belief that the founder of the Parahat raj was "a Rathor or Kadambansi Rajput of Marwar who migrated from Kanauj and established the Singhbhum or Parahat Raj about 54 generations before the advent of the British Government into this part of the country."<sup>3</sup> With this claim went another designed to show the subordinate status of the Hos, as latecomers from Chota-Nagpur: "According to the annals fabricated by Brahmans in glorification of the Singh family, the Hos first appeared in Singhbhum as part of a marriage procession, 'barát', with a

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1. Ethnology, 180.

2. C.W.E. Connolly, Settlement Report, Saraikela & Kharsawan, 1904-1907, Paras. 1 to 5: "About 250 years ago" Jagarnath Singh governed Parahat and Singhbhum Pir; his eldest son Panchanan Singh succeeded his father and the second son Kuar Bikram Singh got Singhbhum Pir, and he chose Saraikela as his headquarters. It was Bikram Singh who brought most of the adjoining areas under his control. He "gave the Kharsawan, Asantalia, Dugni and Bangsai pirs to his second, third, fourth and fifth sons, respectively, as their maintenance, ... these men were the ancestors of the present Thakur of Kharsawan and of the present Khorposhdās of Dugin and Bangsai."

3. Hakim, Saraikela Settlement Report, Para. 9.

bride from Nagpur for the Singh Raja, but however they came, they obtained possession of the best part of the country and have never yielded an inch of the territory they then appropriated."<sup>1</sup>

The hinduized chiefs came to look down upon the Hos. While using them in their feuds they also came to fear them. Their fear increased after Raja Jagannath Singh of Porahat, the Chota-Nagpur maharaja, and the chief of Bamanghati had all, in the 18th century, suffered defeats at their hands. On the first occasion the Larkas drove the Chota-Nagpur men out of Singhbhum with immense slaughter, in the second hundreds of men of the Porahat raja were either killed or died of thirst during the pursuit by the Larka Kols for ten miles, and on the third the Bamanghati chief was completely defeated and lost so many men that, as Roughsedge said, "he has cautiously cultivated their good graces ever since."<sup>2</sup> In fact all other zamindars of the area were thoroughly demoralised by the outcome of these attempts to subjugate these tribals: "Those successes had taken away from the Rajah of Singbhoom and all the neighbouring zemindars all inclination to molest the Lurkas on their own ground."<sup>3</sup> Thus these tribal people, "living in a primeval and patriarchal manner," had continued to maintain "a sort of savage independence, making themselves dreaded and feared by their more powerful and civilized neighbours."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Dalton, Ethnology, 179.

2. to Govt., 9 May 1820, Paras. 16-17, Home Misc. No.724.

3. Ibid. Para.17.

4. Dunbar, op.cit.

This independence the Hos more than maintained against the chiefs even in the 19th century. In 1816-17 the Raja of Parahat, Ghanshyam Singh, reported to the Ramgarh Magistrate that "his house was surrounded by a body of armed men of the Lurka Kole tribe who were daily plundering him of his cattle and making rapid encroachments on his villages which prevented him from quitting his house"<sup>1</sup>-- and his report was confirmed by Bikram Singh of Saraikela and Chetan Singh of Kharsawan. In 1820 the Raja of Parahat was still in difficulties with the Hos, who had revolted and overrun his territories.<sup>2</sup> The two other chiefs "had by good management and firmness continued to prevent any recent encroachment on their possessions."<sup>3</sup> But all three remained in dread of what the Hos might get up to: even when accompanied by Roughsedge's forces in 1820 they could not forget their fears. "The Rajah & Zemindars who are in attendance upon me have so formidable an opinion of the power & ferocity of these savages that notwithstanding the considerable force under my command they are evidently much alarmed and have made formal protests against the danger of the march."<sup>4</sup>

With Roughsedge marching for the first time through the Kolhan, accompanied by his nervous chiefly allies, it is time

1. Ramgarh Magistrate to Govt., 30 Jan. 1817, Para.7, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 39 of 29 July 1817 (<sup>132</sup><sub>61</sub>)

2. Petition to G.G., 1 Feb. 1820, Home Misc. 724, P.487.

3. Roughsedge to Govt., 9 May 1820, Home Misc. No.724.

4. Roughsedge to Govt., 23 March 1820, Para. 2, Home Misc.724.

to consider how the British relationship with Singhbhum had developed. The first reference to Singhbhum coming into contact with the British dates back to mid-1767 when Fergusson was engaged in subduing the jungle zamindars of western Midnapur. The zamindar of Singhbhum appealed through Fergusson to the Midnapur resident to take him under British protection. Vansittart, the Resident, wrote to the Government in December 1767 from Balrampur, "Since my arrival here Petumber Singh, [Pitambar Singh] uncle to Jugganaut Singh [Jagannath Singh] - the present Raja of Singboom (who is now kept under confinement by his cousin Sowenant Sing [Subhnath Singh], has waited on me on the part of his nephew, who supplicates the Company's assistance, and is desirous of putting his territories under their protection and paying them an annual revenue."<sup>1</sup> From Pitambar Singh's account Vansittart sent the following description of Singthum: "... it stretches itself in length from North-East to South-West between 40 & 50 Coss and in breadth from North-West to South-East about 8 or 10. It formerly contained near 14,000 villages, but only about 500 are at present in the Raja's possession; of the others some are gone to ruin and the rest are in the hands of the Coles, a tribe of plundering banditti. The face of the country is in general plain and open: it contains only a few stragglily [sic] hills, has very little jungle in it, and no fortresses

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1. Vansittart to H.Verelst, 13 Dec. 1767, Firminger, Midnapur Dist.Records, I, No.279.



of importance. The Raja is by marriage a distant relation of the Sumbulpore Raja; there is a constant correspondence between the two districts, and an uninterrupted intercourse of merchants. They are situated from each other about 90 Coss, and there is tollerable [sic] good road the whole way between them. Singboom was never reduced under/<sup>the</sup>dominion of the Muguls, but for 52 generations been an independent district in the possession of the present family.....If you propose of taking the country under the Company's protection, four companys of sepoy's I beleieve[sic] will be quite a sufficient force, and it will probably open an easy intercourse with Sumbulpore."<sup>1</sup>

But, being anxious not to stir up the Marathas by any forward move, the Resident only sent two sepoy's into Singhbhum - and they were turned back within a kos or two of the border. They did report, however, that the Raja, residing at Porahat, about 30 kos from the borders of Ghatshila, and 60 from Sambhalpur, was a mere tool in the hands of Sheonath Singh, and they brought back some knowledge of Singhbhum geography.<sup>2</sup>

In 1770 action on the southern frontiers of Singhbhum was contemplated, which would have avenged the losses inflicted on Lt. Nun by the zamindar of Kochang. In the end, the overlord of the area, the raja of Mayurbhanj, was prevailed upon to displace the Kochang zamindar in favour of the Bama<sup>n</sup>ghati chief, and military action was not taken. Still later Abhiram

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1. Ibid.

2. G.Vansittart to Verelst, 6 Feb. 1768, Firminger, Midnapur District Records, II, 303.

Singh of Saraikela took Kochang.

In 1773 British authority infringed directly on Singhbhum, for the raja, who had been encouraging the merchants to bring salt from the Maratha instead of the British districts, so as to avoid the heavy duties levied by the East India Company, was compelled by Lt. Forbes to "execute an obligation <sup>1</sup> never to harbour either Riots [ryots] or merchants in future." Twenty years later in 1793, the thakur of Kharsawan and the Kunwar of Saraikela were compelled to give/<sup>a</sup>similar guarantee. <sup>2</sup> In this way possible loopholes for salt from Maratha territory of Orissa were effectively blocked.

After the annexation of the greater part of Maratha territory in 1803 and after the stationing of a political Agent with troops at Hazaribagh in 1817, the need for a more direct and solid relationship with the Singhbhum rulers was realized.

In August 1818, therefore, the Bengal Government ordered Roughsedge to recognize and confirm Babu Bikram Singh of Saraikela, Babu Chetan Singh of Kharsawan and Raja Ghanshyam Singh of Porahat in their actual possessions. Thus the raja was prevented from enforcing his earlier authority over the other two chiefs whose independence was secured, and all three were reduced to a direct dependence upon the Company.

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1. Forbes to S. Lewis, 30 May 1773, Midnapur Dist. Records, III, Manjivind, chief of Silda, and Jagannath Porter, Sardar ghatwal of Dampara, were the main smugglers of salt.
  2. D.G. Singhbhum, 32.

They did not ask for tribute,<sup>1</sup> and made no claim to control the internal administration of the estates. The only positive measure they took was to ask Roughsedge "to take engagements from them calculated to prevent these districts from becoming an asylum for fugitive offenders, or being otherwise turned to the injury of the public peace, the maintenance of which is indeed the primary object of the proposed connexion with Singbhoom."<sup>2</sup>

The orders given to Roughsedge took effect early in 1820 when the three chiefs entered into written agreements with the Company's Government. The raja of Porahat agreed to obey all orders of the Government and to pay an annual peshkash of Rs.101. But he received no written assurances in return, though he had asked for the Company's support in the recovery of his household goddess' image from Saraikela, in the re-establishment of his authority over Saraikela and Kharsawan, and in checking the harassing inroads of the Larka Kols, and had received Roughsedge's verbal promise of aid for the first and third enterprises.<sup>3</sup> (The second aim was contrary to the Governor-General's order to "leave the three chiefs in secure enjoyment of their actual possessions independent of each other," under the supremacy of the British Government).

But when Roughsedge informed the Government of his

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1. Govt. to Roughsedge, 29 Aug. 1818, Para.3, Home Misc. No.724 : "The exaction of tribute from the chiefs of Singbhoom forms no part of the views of His Lordship in Council."  
 2. Ibid.  
 3. T.Wilkinson, Political Agent on the S.W.F., to Govt. 12 Jan. 1833, Para.3, B.C.1503/58904. Also, E.Roughsedge to Govt. 2 Feb. 1820, Home Misc. No.724.

verbal agreement,<sup>1</sup> they asked him to desist from meddling with the internal affairs of the chiefs. He was particularly asked to disassociate himself from the image affair, and not to take steps against the Larka Kols.<sup>2</sup> (In 1819 Roughsedge had asked his assistant to go to Porahat, to contact the chiefs and to collect all possible information about the country and "especially of the extraordinary race called Larkas", but he could not penetrate far enough to contact them).<sup>3</sup>

However, the Major had meanwhile taken actions which precipitated a clash of the British with these tribal people. Persuaded by the chiefs, Roughsedge had decided both to demonstrate British might to the Hos, and to help Raja Ghanshyam Singh reestablish some portion of the influence over them which his ancestors had possessed."<sup>4</sup> Encouraged by the conciliatory mood of the tribal leaders of northern Singhbhum, to whom presents were given, Roughsedge marched south into the Kolhan. For a while all went well, then while Roughsedge himself was attacked, the pro-British leaders of northern Singhbhum were set upon the Hos of Baridia and Gamharia.<sup>5</sup> In November 1820 he had also to report that the Karaikela chief had shown "for the last four months a spirit of unprovoked and contumacious disobedience."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Roughsedge to Govt., 9 May, 1820, Para. 3. Ibid.
  2. Govt. to Roughsedge, 3 June 1820, T. Wilkinson to Govt. 12 Jan. 1833, Para. 4. B.C.1503/58904.
  3. D.G. Singhbhum, 32.
  4. Roughsedge to Govt., 9 May 1820, Para. 22, Home Misc. No. 724.
  5. Roughsedge to Govt., 19 June 1820, Para. 11, Ibid.
  6. Roughsedge to Govt., 14 Nov. 1820, Para. 2, Karaikela was a jagir of 84 villages in North-west Singhbhum, to the north and north west of Chaibasa. Ibid.

Nevertheless Roughsedge was able to reduce the Hos to obedience, and some hundred barkandazes were used to enforce the restored domination of the Porahat raja. The success was shortlived. By February 1821 the Hos were attacking the parties of barkandazes, and Roughsedge was appealing to Calcutta for permission to take strong measures against "this intractable tribe of ferocious savages," and for the establishment of military posts in Singhbhum.<sup>1</sup> For the military posts he requested that a force of 500 men might be allotted, a number difficult to find since the Ramgarh battalion had been reduced to 1,200 men, but one necessary, he argued, in view of the "dangerous situation of Rajah Gunsham Sing and Takoor cheetan Sing [Chetan Singh] and the civilized inhabitants of Singbhum in general, who having been so recently admitted within the palme of British protection will naturally look up to Government."<sup>2</sup>

In all this Roughsedge gave no hint that the Hos might have reasons for their hostility, brushing aside any such view with his references to their ferocious savagery. Yet, as we have seen, the Hos had been independent of the rajas of Porahat for fifty years, and could rightly object to the use of the Company's strength to reimpose their rule. Moreover, the raja, unable to pay for the Company barkandazes, had attached them to his revenue collectors with orders to collect sufficient for their pay, and they had been seizing the goods

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1. Roughsedge to Govt., 17 Feb. 1821, Para.5, Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.6.

and animals of the Hos - as the Kharsawan thakur deposed - and had molested the daughter of Ghasi Singh, one of the village headmen.<sup>1</sup> (Even when Roughsedge became aware of the Hos' complaints he accepted the testimony of one of the raja's servants that they were false,<sup>2</sup> showing to the Porahat raja the same sort of favour as against the tribesmen, as he had done to the Deo chief in Palamau - even though in Palamau such action had led to the rising of 1817).

Meanwhile the ravages of the Larka Kols increased. The parganas of Kera, Chakradharpur and Chainpur were sacked, the estates of Porahat and Kharsawan brought to the brink of ruin, and the people, despairing of safety, were fleeing in all directions.<sup>3</sup> Roughsedge submitting his plans to the Government, in March 1821, admitted that the season was far advanced and that there was a grave risk of general sickness.<sup>4</sup>

Even so it was decided in April to continue with large scale military operations. As they proceeded, the real nature of the land and the people - the inaccessibility of the former and the martial spirit of the latter - was revealed. From Gurga, the north-west extremity of Singhbhum to the Dalma hill in Barabhum at the north-east corner was found a chain of hills divided into three ranges, varying in breadth from 12 to 20 miles and in height two to three thousand feet. This chain

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1. Ibid. Para.2. Also Roughsedge to Govt., 7 Aug. 1821, Para.2, Home Misc. No.724.

2. Roughsedge to Govt., 23 Feb. 1821, Para.2. Ibid.

3. Roughsedge to Govt., 1 March 1821, Ibid.

4. Roughsedge to Govt., 6 March 1821, Para.5. Ibid.  
Roughsedge to Lord Hastings, 18 March 1821, Ibid.

made "all access from Chota-Nagpur and Tamar into the pergun-  
nahs of Porahant [sic], Seriekela, Kera and Cusawa [Khasawan]  
in Singhbhum proper extremely difficult; while from the south-  
west and west the regular troops could not penetrate the  
"masses of unaccessible mountains."<sup>1</sup>

Much information was also for the first time acquired  
about the nature of the Kols and their relationships with the  
various chiefs of the area. Roughsedge's long report of  
2 April 1821 to Lt. Col. Richards, the officer commanding in  
Singhbhum, provides the first detailed knowledge of the Kolhan.  
He discussed each estate in turn, starting with Gurga in the  
north-west, a mountainous, heavily jungled district, partially  
obedient to the Porahat raja, but a constant nuisance to  
Chota-Nagpur into which the Hos were "perpetually making in-  
roads." <sup>2</sup> East of Gurga was the <sup>l</sup>tabuk of Hurnor [Hurnee] or  
Burgaon, 84 villages under jagirdar Brijmohan Singh. The jag-  
irdar was a Bhuiya, but three-fourths of the ryots were Hos,  
and so "under very little controul [sic]".<sup>3</sup> Their plundering  
grounds were Chota-Nagpur and Tamar.

Next came the pargana of Karaikela, still further to  
the east. This too was under a Bhuiya, jagirdar Khandu Pater,  
whose Larka ryots were "sufficiently wild."<sup>4</sup> The zamindar was  
"more attached to the Seriekela zamindar than to his legiti-  
mate master the Raja", who had made several complaints against

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1. Roughsedge to Lt.Col .Richards, 2 April 1821, Para.4. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.5.

3. Ibid. Para.6.

4. Ibid. Para. 7 See his role in 1832.

him.<sup>1</sup>

Then there was pargana Kera, east of Karaikela and about 14 kos north by west from Chaibasa. Its zamindar, a relation of the Porahat Raja, was "very well-disposed, decent young man, but reduced to great weakness and indigence."<sup>2</sup>

Its Ho inhabitants (three-fourths of the total population) were "much connected by blood and marriage" with the Kols of Tamar.<sup>3</sup> Kera, like Karaikela, was one of "the strongest and most difficult parts of Singhbhum for military operations."<sup>4</sup>

Kharsawan, with 84 villages, was "less infested with Coles than any other" and belonged to "an intelligent and powerful Zemindar named Takoor cheeton Sing [Thakur chetan Singh]",<sup>5</sup> He had not only punished the Larka plunderers, but had also conciliated their headmen, and had thus secured protection for his non-tribal ryots (mostly Brahmans) in the open plain near the Sanjai river. Though the Larkas believing that he was the cause of the arrival of the British troops in Singhbhum, had commenced a vendetta against him, the strong stockades of the town of Kharsawan, and Chetan Singh's firm resistance had so far secured him.<sup>6</sup>

In the parganas (Dhangae and Gurae) east of Kharsawan and forming the north-eastern corner of Singhbhum, there were

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para. 8.

3. Ibid. It was why they had given shelter to Rudan and Kunta, the Tamar rebel leaders of 1819-20.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid. Para.9: See his role during the unrest of 1831-33 as a supporter of the Government.

6. Ibid.



no refractory Hos. In neighbouring Kochang, however, only lately acquired by Kun<sup>w</sup>ar Bikram Singh of Saraikela, and a bone of contention between him and the raja of Mayurbhanj, Kol depredations had begun. Bikram Singh, though a very powerful and wealthy chief, could not prevent the inroads of the Larkas whose territories (Kolhan) bordered his estate to the west for about 15 kos.<sup>1</sup> The town of Saraikela, like Kharsawan, was well stockaded and populated. Moreover, there were a few small guns mounted on the wall of the Kunwar's house. These factors had no doubt deterred the Larkas from launching an attack against him. But a spirit of great animosity existed between his family and those of Raja Ghanshyam Singh and Chetan Singh of Kharsawan,<sup>2</sup> Bikram Singh's authority was pretty well established to the north-eastern side of his estate. But the direct road from Saraikela to Bamunghati to the south-east was impassable for travellers, nay for armed men too, "on account of the dread entertained of the Lurkas of the Mohurbunge pergunnah, of Toe or Toypier, who defeated the zemindar of Bamunghante with great slaughter...about 18 years ago, and had ever since defied his and all other authority."<sup>3</sup>

Of the country between Dugpusa and Jayantgarh (an estate of 120 villages), Roughsedge secured no adequate information, though he reported that the Larkas of this area were "very refractory and treacherous."<sup>4</sup> The bordering parganas

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1. Ibid. Para.11.

2. Ibid. Para.12.

3. Ibid. Para.13.

4. Ibid.

between Jayantgarh and Sunudgegarh on the south-west and western face of Singhbhum were Saranda and Kolgarh, "the former containing 250 reputed villages," most impervious mountains and jungles inhabited exclusively by independent Larkas, who had expelled their chief, a feudatory of the Porahat Raja.<sup>1</sup> The central parganas from north-west to north-east were Porahat, Chakradharpur and Asimtoria - the first being hilly and woody, and the other two open and level. But there were no refractory Hos in them. On the other parganas of the plain, lying to the south of Chakradharpur and Asimtoria, and like them thickly populated, Roughsedge had nothing definite to say - except that these were Larka parganas.

Finally, in the southern/<sup>most</sup>parts of the Kolhan lay a "very extensive and broad range of mountains containing within them many villages inhabited by refractory Lurkas and running from north to south to the extent of 10 or 15 coss east is the populous pergunna of Goonila a small portion of which to the southward only is jungly, beyond that the southern [part] of Cherrie and then the Mohurbunge pergunnah of Josepoor [Jushpur] which I believe to be very extensive."<sup>2</sup> The inhabitants of these regions were among the most refractory of the Larka Kols - notably those of Toipir and Burndia [Burburia] pirs.<sup>3</sup>

It was to the warlike inhabitants of this difficult country that Roughsedge then proposed to administer "a signal

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1. Ibid. Para. 15: It was a custom among them to expel the chief "when the freak takes them."

2. Ibid. Para. 16.

3. Ibid. Para. 18.

chastisement."<sup>1</sup> He expressed the firm belief that "after an unavailing trial of kindness and conciliation terror alone can be expected to operate efficaciously and permanently."<sup>2</sup> To that end he asked that some of the leaders might be executed in a particularly gruesome manner by being blown away from the mouth of a gun. "This mode of carrying the sentence of the drumhead court martial which Government would probably authorize the institution of, appears to me," he wrote, "to be calculated to make the deepest and most salutary impression on the minds of the Lurkas, and ... would tend greatly to deter them for a long time, from a repetition of their late misconduct."<sup>3</sup> Such an exhibition of force would, he hoped, effectively efface from the memory of that "untamed and impatient" tribe all "recollection of their new [now] long enjoyed independence."<sup>4</sup> It would also prepare them for the positive civilizing programme he had prepared - the learning of Hindustani customs and languages, and of a new life as useful coolies or labourers, like the Dhangar Kols of Chota-Nagpur.<sup>5</sup>

Such were Major Roughsedge's plans. The chiefs who had suffered at the hands of the Hos of the Kolhan had their plans, too, mainly for wreaking reprisals and securing a share in such booty as the advance of the Company's troops made available. This last entered, indeed, into Roughsedge's plans, for he thought that many cattle and much grain which would escape

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1. Roughsedge to Govt., 14 Apl. 1821, Para.4, Home Misc. No.724.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Para.5.

4. Ibid. Paras. 12-13.

5. Ibid. Paras. 10-11.

the notice of the regular troops not much acquainted with the country would be discovered by the roving parties of the zamindars and their followers. He therefore allowed them to take part in the operations.<sup>1</sup>

The campaign in Singhbhum lasted till May 1821. After the first phase of the campaign, it became necessary to call in a considerable body of infantry, cavalry and artillery to complete the subjugation of Kolhan. The campaign was no easy one, for the Hos showed great dash and courage and very considerable tactical skill. Dalton and Bradley-Birt both comment upon the fierceness with which the Hos fought, rushing in with battle axes when their bows and arrows were of no use, showing "a degree of rashness and hardihood scarcely credible."<sup>2</sup>

" Nowhere in Chota-Nagpore had the British troops experienced a resistance so spirited and courageous."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless the issue could not long remain in doubt. The well armed Company's troops inflicted on the Hos a terrible slaughter, and forced them to surrender. The Larka Kols, agreed to submit to the rule of the chiefs and zamindars, to pay a quit-rent of eight annas per plough, and not to molest travellers. Most important of all, they were forced to agree "to allow persons of all castes to settle in [their] villages and afford them protection," and to learn the Uriya

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1. Roughsedge to Lt. Col. Richards, 22 Apl. 1821, Para.5, Home Misc. No.724.
  2. Dalton, Ethnology, 181.
  3. Bradley-Birt, Chota-Nagpore, 92.

and Hindi languages.<sup>1</sup>

Singhbhum and, more particularly, the Kolhan were thus subjected to the hinduized chiefs and zamindars, and laid open to the incursions of non-tribal peoples. Tickell, in 1840, could still hope that the opening of the country might not have any ill effects, writing "among this simple race, the reputed evils of civilization have not yet commenced to be felt; and fervently is it to be trusted though, alas, the hope may be utopian, that the introduction of our courts of justice, in checking the lawless tendency of the Koles, may not destroy those virtues which are inherent to a primitive state of society."<sup>2</sup> But the evils of civilization had in fact begun to work, from 1821 onwards. The silk merchants, who bought up the tussar silk cocoons collected in the forests, the Sundis or Hindu manufacturers of spirits, the gwalas who herded the cattle, once allowed freely to enter the Kolhan, could begin to exploit the Hos. The Brahmans began to establish their hold over them, and by persuading them to marry only within their kilis or septs, to introduce the curse of caste. The Bamanghati and Mayurbhanj chiefs, their hold strengthened, began to harass the Hos bringing salt from Puri in Orissa, exacting numerous tolls. As the Kolhan Settlement Report records, the

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1. E. Roughsedge to Govt. 8 May 1821, Home Misc. No. 724: Some of the terms of the agreement had important bearings on the later development and on the unrest of 1832-33 - for example the imposition of the control of the Mahapatra of Bamanghati over four important pirs of (Toeepir, Aolapir, Lalgarhpir and Barbariapir); and the reward of Chainpur jagir to Raghunath Bisi for his services to the troops.

2. Lt. Tickell, op.cit.

tantis (weavers) "began to use their greater cunning to effect, and as Dakuas, touts and thieves they first obtained money and position, and then got hold of land, usually for an inadequate consideration, and became cultivators."<sup>1</sup>

These developments, of course, took time to take effect, and for some years the Hos remained quiet. Gilbert, who succeeded Roughsedge as the Agent on this frontier, was so much impressed during his tour by the faithful fulfilment of their engagements by this "wild race of people", that in 1822 he requested the Government to reward them.<sup>2</sup> All the Larka Kols showed their satisfaction with the conduct of the sepoy posted in the area, and their gratification at receiving presents from the Agent. In 1826, when the question of extending the agreement with the Larka Kols for another five years came up, Gilbert impressed by their continuing good behaviour, despite a succession of bad harvests, secured for them the same revenue terms as before, eight annas per plough.<sup>3</sup> That stipulated sum was regularly paid by the Kols of Singhbhum until 1830.

Such disturbances as did take place after 1821, were nearly all the result of squabbles and rivalries between the various chiefs and zamindars of Singhbhum, who involved the Hos who had been placed under them. One such dispute has

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1. A.D.Tuckey, op.cit. Para.56.

2. Gilbert, Pol.Agent, to Govt., 14 Dec. 1822, Para.2, Home Misc. No.724, : Beads, plain, coarse clothes, spiritous liquors etc. worth four to five hundred rupees.

3. Gilbert to Govt., 18 Aug. 1826, Ibid.

already been referred to - that of the Porahat raja with Ajambar Singh of Saraikela over the stolen Porahat goddess. In this the Hos of Saraikela had a particular interest, for they had not forgotten the oppression committed by Bikram Singh, the father of Ajambar Singh, and they feared that if Ajambar Singh retained possession of the goddess Puri Devi, he would become as powerful - and oppressive - as his father had been.<sup>1</sup> In 1822, to allay their fear, and to satisfy the Porahat raja and his hereditary diwan, Raghunath Bisi, Gilbert sought Government's permission to compel the Saraikela thakur to surrender the image. Permission was at the time refused, but the Agent continued to press the Government for sanction, and in March 1824, force was used to secure the handing back to Porahat of Puri Devi.<sup>2</sup>

No sooner had this dispute been settled than the thakur of Saraikela was involved in another dispute, this time with the kunwar of Kharsawan. The dispute was over rights in the pargana of Asantala. The Agent decided it in 1826 in favour of the thakur of Kharsawan, who was naturally supported by the raja of Porahat.<sup>3</sup>

The death of the Porahat raja, Ghanshyam Singh in 1827 did not cause any disturbance. He was quietly succeeded by Achet Singh, who confirmed the agreement signed in 1820 by his

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1. The Hos of Saraikela refused to pay their plough-tax through the Saraikela zamindar, paying it instead through the Subadar of the Ramgarh battalion stationed at Chakradharpur : Gilbert to Govt., 14 Dec. 1822, Home Misc. No.724.
  2. Gilbert to Govt., 10 March 1824, and 24 Apl. 1824, Ibid.
  3. Gilbert to Govt., 11 July 1826, Ibid.

father, adding only a promise not to give shelter to thieves and murderers, but to apprehend them, and report their seizure to the British authorities.<sup>1</sup> The Company, for its part, so far departed from its policy of not intervening in the internal affairs of the estate, as to insist that the office of diwan should not be given to the new raja's favourite, Krishna, but to Ghasi Bisi and Kunwar Chakradhar Singh. However, Krishna was subsequently permitted to become diwan, on the advice of Major Mackenzie, the political agent on the south-west frontier.<sup>2</sup>

Another succession caused far more trouble. In May 1826 the zamindar of Bamanghati, Niranjan Mahapater died. The raja of Mayurbhanj, overlord of Bamanghati, thereafter tried to evade recognition of the heir Madho Das Mahapater, and to seize the zamindari for himself. This was resisted by the kols of Bamanghati, - and especially by those of Toipir, who refused to pay rents directly to the raja. The Toipir Kols had played a considerable part in the 1821 disturbances, so Gilbert wrote to the Cuttack Commissioner, under whom Mayurbhanj came, asking him to intervene, "it being expedient to conciliate as much as possible the wild and savage Toeepier Coles I earnestly recommend that their request be complied with."<sup>3</sup> His case was further strengthened by news of the improper proceedings by

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1. Capt. Wilkinson to Govt., 12 Jan. 1833, Para.6, B.C.1503/58904.

2. Ibid.

3. Gilbert to T.Pakenham, Cuttack Commissioner, 31 March 1827, Home Misc. No.724.



the revenue agents of the raja, within the Bamanghati estate. Convinced that the adherents and relations of Madho Das Mahapater were encouraging him to take to arms, Gilbert arranged in May 1827 to take both Madho Das and the Mayurbhanj raja to Cuttack to discuss the whole matter with the Commissioner.<sup>1</sup>

A settlement was there patched up, which was warmly approved, as offering a return to peace and order, by the Bengal Government.<sup>2</sup> But the situation continued to be tense, and late in 1831 Bamanghati was again in turmoil. The crux of the problem was administrative: the four parganas of Toipir, Burbariapir, Aolapir, and Lalgarpir were inhabited by Hos and might have been expected therefore to come, like the rest of Singhbhum, under the Agent of the Governor-General for the south-west frontier. But Bamanghati, of which they formed part, being a zamindari of Mayurbhanj, came under the Cuttack Commissioner. In 1821 Major Roughsedge had pointed out the anomaly, and had suggested that the four parganas be placed either under the Cuttack or the Midnapur authorities.<sup>3</sup> He had, however, been entrusted to assume temporary charge of the parganas, and that charge his successors had continued to hold. Consequently the Bamanghati zamindar, in respect of the four Larka Kol parganas, remained independent of the Raja of

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1. Gilbert to Govt., 29 May 1827, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Stockwell, 27 Nov. 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 443 Apl. 1832, (140<sub>5</sub>)

2. Vide Govt. to Gilbert, 17 Aug. 1827, Ibid.

3. Wilkinson to Stockwell, Cuttack Commissioner, 27 Nov. 1831. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 443 Apl. 1832, (140<sub>5</sub>)

Mayurbhanj and solely responsible to the agent for the South-west frontier.<sup>1</sup> This naturally aroused the jealousy of the Mayurbhanj raja.

The situation was further complicated by disturbances arising in the same parganas from other causes. One was the oppression practised upon the Larka Kols of Jayantgarh by Raghunath Bisi, who had received the pargana as a reward for his aid to the British in 1821, and had since accumulated vast wealth by means more often foul than fair. By 1830 he had so roused the Larka Kols that his life was in danger, and his pargana was exposed to constant incursions.<sup>2</sup>

The Agent was in a dilemma. His predecessors had supported Raghunath Bisi, but to support him now would mean posting troops at unhealthy Jayantgarh, and risking a fresh clash with the Hos. Already there was a feverish stir in Lalgarh and Aola and the village headmen were refusing to pay the plough-tax.<sup>3</sup> But to leave the Hos' crimes unpunished would invite outrages in other parganas also.

A second reason for the disturbances was that the Raja of Porahat was showing himself unable to punish the Kolhan Kos for their outrages upon the Muslim and other non-tribal traders in salt. Apparently Wilkinson, the acting Agent, wrote to the Calcutta authorities, "If that punishment cannot be

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1. Wilkinson to Stockwell, Cuttack Commissioner, 27 Nov. 1831, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 1403 Apl. 1832, (140<sub>5</sub>)

2. Wilkinson to Govt., 12 May 1830, Home Misc. No. 724.

3. Ibid.

inflicted by the Rajah, of which I see no prospect from his powerless state, probably we ought to take the Cole districts under [our] own immediate management, dividing them into communities of several villages, and placing over them a man of energy, through whom they should communicate indirectly with the agent."<sup>1</sup> He went on to suggest that the revenues and abwabs levied by the raja on the Larka Kol villages should be spent upon the maintenance of a military force under this manager, and then, if possible, they could be enlisted upon a police force recruited from the Larka Kols themselves.<sup>2</sup> These wise suggestions were, however, turned down, and the disturbances continued.

In November 1831 the whole question of Bamanghati was brought to a head by an attack upon the zamindari by the Raja of Mayubhanj. Wilkinson explained the whole history of the four kol parganas to the Cuttack Commissioner, and in December the latter agreed to take charge of them. Since the Mayurbhanj raja, whose minority was now at an end, was clearly determined to push his claims to the full, the Commissioner decided to act as arbiter in the dispute : of the Bamanghati zamindar it was reported: "in the uncertainty which appears to have existed in the mind of the zemindar whether thro' tributary

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1. The contents of the letter suggest that it was written by Wilkinson to Govt., Home Misc., No. 724, pp. 478-479.

2. Ibid.

to the Rajah he was subject to the orders of the political agent or to those of the superintendent of Tributary Mahauls, he seems to have lost sight of his obligations as a feudal tenant."<sup>1</sup> Through Wilkinson, therefore, he was ordered to desist from any military or other reckless measures, and troops were moved to overawe him. The Raja of Mayurbhanj was also ordered to stop his military operations in Bamanghati.<sup>2</sup> In this way the administrative problem of the area was temporarily settled.<sup>3</sup> But the events during the unrest of 1831-1833 showed that the problem of the Larka Kols of Singhbhum was still unsolved.

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1. G. Stockwell to Wilkinson, 5 Dec. 1831, Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 3 Apl. 1832, (140<sub>5</sub>)
  2. Ibid.; Also see Govt. to Wilkinson, 16 Dec. 1831, Ibid.
  3. Govt. to Wilkinson, 16 Dec. 1831, Ibid. The Bengal Govt. instructed the Cuttack Commissioner to ensure that the Mayurbhanj Raja did not oppress the Bamanghati chief in revenge for his past insubordination.

### CHAPTER III.

#### The Outbreak of Unrest, Its Progress and Suppression

##### The First Phase, December 1831 to May 1832.

The year 1831 saw trouble in eastern and central Bengal, but to the south-west all seemed calm. The local authorities were busy with routine matters: Cuthbert, Magistrate-Judge and Collector for Ramgarh, was settling revenue details in Palamau,<sup>1</sup> his assistant, Neave was at headquarters; <sup>Lambert,</sup> the commissioner of the Patna division, was trying cases at Sherghati.<sup>2</sup> Both Neave and Lambert were looking forward to the leave for which they had applied.<sup>3</sup> There were some disturbances in neighbouring Sambhalpur, but Chota Nagpur seemed peaceful.

Then, at the very end of the year the tribal people - the Dhangar and the Larka Kols - broke into unprecedentedly widespread rebellion, shaking Government abruptly from its complacent slumber. The disturbances started on 11 December 1831 in Sonapur "when a party of Coles from Roochang [Kochang] and Jamoor carried off from the village of

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1. Cuthbert to Wilkinson, 11 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54223.  
 2. W.Lambert to Govt., 2 Apl. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1362/54225.  
 3. Ibid. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 8 and 9 of 17 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )  
     Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 17 of 31 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )

Koomung [Kumang] which was held in Tieka or farm by Mahomed ally Naik) two hundred head of cattle without however inflicting bodily injury, plundering or burning other property."<sup>1</sup>

Such cattle raiding was not uncommon - though the scale was unusually large. But the attack on Kumang was soon followed up on 20 December by a raid on four other villages in the Sonepur pargana by a body of some 700 men. These villages were plundered and burnt, and two men - both sikhs - were wounded.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of both the attacks was that they were attacks upon outsiders, a Muslim of Kumang, and a Sikh, Hari Singh, who had taken the farm at the four villages. Because of the widespread tribal discontent at their loss of land and influence to outsiders, these two attacks found popular support - the arrow of war circulated, says Dalton, like the fiery Cross <sup>3</sup> and more and more tribal people joined the insurrection. Some, as in the mutiny of 1857,

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.3, B.C. 1502/58891. Bindrai Manki stated later on that a few days before this he and other tribesmen had assembled at Lanka, in Tamar, and decided to begin at once "to cut, plunder, murder and eat": Bindrai's statement to Bahadur Dubharaia, Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 12 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1363/4227.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.3, B.C. 1502/58891.
  3. Ethnology, 171, "An arrow passed from village to village is the summons to arms": Ibid. footnote.

may have joined from fear of social ostracism, others were glad of a chance to plunder, but many followed because their natural tribal leaders called them to assert tribal authority. In the second attack there took part Sui, a munda or village headman, Topa Munda and Bindrai of Singhbhum, Singrai, a manki or circle headman of Sudgaon, another Singrai of Kochang in Tamar, and several other mankis and mundas of Sonepur and Anandipur.<sup>1</sup> Their attack was directed against the outsider who had taken over the villages of Singrai Manki when he was dispossessed by Kunwar Harnath Shahi of Govindpur.

These attacks were quite unexpected, and found the authorities totally unprepared. Troops there were none (the strength of the Ramgarh battalion had been reduced<sup>2</sup> during Bentinck's economy campaign) and many of the police stations had been abandoned. The police who went to investigate the second outrage were only a handful of men - the Jamadar of Govindpur thana, and two of his barkandazes, supported by thirty armed men of the Kunwar of Govindpur - and though they completed their investigation, they were pursued and attacked during their return and suffered heavy casualties

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.3, B.C. 1502/58891. Also see Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 12 Feb. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.
  2. Metcalfe wrote to Bentinck on 29 January 1832, "We must I conceive hereafter, as a permanent arrangement for that quarter, either increase the strength of the Ramgarh Battalion, or post other corps there:" Bentinck MS., Box 17.

- one of the barkandazes was killed, fourteen of the Kunwar's men were wounded.<sup>1</sup>

The discomfiture of the police force only encouraged the insurgents, for on Christmas Day, 300 tribal people attacked, plundered and burnt the villages of Gassu [?] and Ramji [Ramjeri], the former held in farm by Kale Khan and the latter by Saif-ullah Khan (both of Deo, now in the Gaya district). One man was killed and thrown into the fire and another wounded, and Saif-ullah Khan only saved his life "by defending himself in the upper storey of his house, which the Coles set fire to, but on approach of assistance they fled before it was consumed."<sup>2</sup>

On 2 January they returned to plunder and burn Kumang and attacked a neighbouring village Koru Buru. On the 3rd, they thoroughly plundered Gangira, and murdered the thikadar or farmer Jafar Ali, the kol woman whom he kept as his concubine, their two children, and several others of his dependants. (Had he not heeded the assurances of Moti Ram Rautia, of Bamhani, from whom he had taken the farm of Gangira, he might have escaped to Deo).<sup>2</sup> About one thousand insurgents took part in the attack.

So far little attempt had been made to check the outrages. The poor daroga, Karam Ali, had applied for aid

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.3, B.C. 1502/58891.

2. Ibid. Para.4.



to all the zamindars of the southern parganas, and to the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur without result. The Nazir of the Sherghat court was but little more successful. He went to Khunti, and called in the thana barkandazes of Barkagarh, Jhikuchatti, and Govindpur and found but one zamindar, the kunwar of Govindpur, who was ready to supply armed assistance. He reached Gangira with this force, inspected the damage, ordered Karam Ali to bury the dead and returned to Khunti. No sooner had he gone than the Kols returned; and Karam Ali fled for his life.<sup>2</sup>

Nor were his attempts at negotiation successful. On 5 January he had offered immediately to restore their lands to the mankis of Sonepur, if they would halt the depredations. At the suggestions of Ghasi Manjhi, the Ilaqadar of Khunti, he had also appealed to them to come in to him, offering the necessary assurances.<sup>3</sup> The only response he received was the audacious statement that they "would not attend to the Hakim, the Kooar of Sonepoor nor to Ghassie Manjec, that they would not leave a single Teekadar alive and that they would destroy every village of the Sonepore pergunnah and even Govindpore itself and would wash their weapons in the river (the Karroo) which flows

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1. Ibid. Para.4.

2. Ibid. Para.5.

3. Ibid. Para.6. on 5 January Katunga<sup>~</sup> on the 7th Maringada had been burned.

past it."<sup>1</sup>

The nazir thus acted to the best of his capacity. In the words of the Joint Commissioners for Chota-Nagpur, he "conducted himself with great judgment and firmness and had the zemindars come forward with assistance, we<sup>are</sup>/of opinion that the progress of insurrection might have been arrested at this stage."<sup>2</sup> But his arrest of Baijnath Manki added oil to the fire,<sup>3</sup> and his withdrawal to Govindpur on the 9th morning further heartened the insurgents. By the 11th, the Kols were mustering in force, (about 4,000) to attack Govindpur itself. The Kunwar of Govindpur made a piteous appeal to his mundas and mankis to protect and assist him. None paid any heed, and the Kunwar fled with his family to Dorea, his guru's (preceptor's) place.<sup>4</sup> The daroga and the thana employees fled towards Jhiku-chatti. On 12 January, Govindpur and almost the whole of the pargana of Belkudra were plundered and burned, especially the houses of the non-tribal people. The kunwar, at Dorea, was compelled, by a body of insurgents, to write an amalnama for the villages

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1. Ibid. Para.8, B.C. 1502/58891.

2. Ibid. Para.9. But the causes were so deeprooted that it seems hardly possible that it could have been checked at this stage.

3. Ibid. Para.7.

4. Kunwar Harnath Sahi to Singrai Manki and others, 14 Pus 1888 Sumbat, B.C.1363/54227.

of Turpa patti, making them over/<sup>to</sup>the Kamal Singh and Samode Baraik.<sup>1</sup>

The insurrection had now become universal, and the tribal insurgents indiscriminately attacked "the Hindoos, Mahomedans, and other foreigners, who were settled in their villages engaged in commercial, or agricultural pursuits, drove them almost universally from their homes and property, which were burnt or plundered; and sacrificed numbers of those who fell into their hands, to their excited passions, of revenge and hatred."<sup>2</sup> The disposable force of the police in Ramgarh, as Neave said, was "wholly inadequate to repel these marauders."<sup>3</sup> Since Cuthbert, the district officer, was away in Palamau, Neave called on Captain Wilkinson, the Acting Political Agent to the Governor-General on the south-west frontier and Temporary Commandant of the Ramgarh battalion, to provide "a sufficient force for the protection of the district."<sup>4</sup>

The reports of the Govindpur daroga indicated that the insurgents were already a thousand strong, and their number was growing.<sup>5</sup> But at the headquarters of the Ramgarh

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1. Statement of Kunwar Harnath Sahi, 28 Feb. 1832; Also Harnath Sahi to the mundas of Turpapatti, 13 Pus, 1888 Sumbut, Ibid. An amalnama was an authority to take possession of a property or an order for possession. These cultivators had been dispossessed of this village a few years back.
  2. Bengal & Agra Annual Guide & Gazetteer, 1841, II, 35.
  3. R. Neave to Wilkinson, 9 Jan. 1832, B.C.1503/58896.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Neave to Govt., 9 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54223.

battalion the whole disposable force only consisted of one subadar, two jamadars, six havildars, six naiks, 100 sepoy, and a six-pounder. Nevertheless Wilkinson acted quickly. All the available force was marched direct to Barkagarh on 12 January. He also directed a party of the Ramgarh battalion, on the march from Sambhalpur, to proceed to Govindpur.<sup>1</sup>

Wilkinson also urged Neave to apply for further military forces, pointing out the inadequacy of his own force now that the Dhangar Kols of Chota-Nagpur were joining the Larka Kols of Singhbhum.<sup>2</sup> From the Raja of Ramgarh he asked the loan of two elephants with cavalry escort to carry his guns across the ghats and to Cuthbert he wrote saying "your presence in the pergunnah would be of great advantage to the speedy restoration of tranquility."<sup>3</sup>

Wilkinson's estimate of the situation was approved by Neave, who asked for reinforcements from Dinapur,<sup>4</sup> while Cuthbert under orders from Lambert, the Commissioner of the Patna division, hurried to the headquarters of the Ramgarh battalion at Hazaribagh.<sup>5</sup> Thus, "although the Government of Bengal acknowledged no obligation to protect the zemindars of Chota-Nagpore against each other or their

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1. Wilkinson to Govt., 11 Jan. 1832, B.C.1503/58896.

2. Wilkinson to Neave, 11 Jan. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1503/58896.

3. Wilkinson to Cuthbert, 12 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54223.

4. Neave to Major Penny, Brigade Major, Dinapur, 12 Jan. 1832. Ibid.

5. Cuthbert to Lambert, Patna Commissioner, 13 Jan. 1832.

Ibid. Also see Govt. to Lambert, 19 Jan. 1832. B.C.1362/54224

subjects; yet even its cold and selfish policy was roused to the necessity of interference by the impossibility of confining the outrages perpetrated to the estates of the dependent chiefs, and their menaced extension to the British districts on the one hand, and those of the Raja of Nagpore on the other".<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the insurrection continued to spread like wild-fire. On 13 January, all the villages of thana Govindpur (including the town itself), the Barkagarh pargana and thana, and several villages within the Jhikuchatti thana (to the north-west of Sonepur) were burned and plundered. Those foreigners or suds, who had not made good their escape, were murdered in cold blood. The ravages extended to the river Koel near Basia in the south, and to the ancient village of Chutia about ten miles south of Pitoria.<sup>2</sup>

By then, the nazir had reached Churia. There he tried to get Mukund Singh Baraik to resist the insurgents, but when he found that even the tribesmen of his own estate were wavering, he fled with his family into the jungle while the nazir pushed on to Sherghati.<sup>3</sup> The huge wealth in Churia

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1. Wilson, Mill's History of British India, IX, 234.

2. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.10, B.C.1502/58891. Now the number of insurgents was stated to be fourteen thousand: Neave to Govt., 14 Jan.1832, B.C.1362/54223.

3. Jt.Commissions to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.10, B.C.1502 1502/58891.

was thus left to be seized.

What had happened in Sonepur, Govindpur and Barkagarh soon happened in the other thanas. Some hundred villages in Jhikuchatti were burned or plundered, and by the 14th, the rebels were within a kos of the thana itself. On the 16th, the nerves of the thana staff broke, Jhikuchatti was abandoned, and they made their way, with those of Govindpur, to Lohardugga and thence to Palamau.<sup>1</sup>

The Armai thana was also overrun, the amlas and peaceful inhabitants fleeing to Palamau or Jashpur. Those who stayed behind lost their lives and by January 24, almost all the villages of the area had been utterly destroyed. The daroga had fled to Leslieganj in Palamau. The insurrection then spread into Barwa and the raja of that pargana, his employees and all the 'respectable' inhabitants sought refuge in the estate of Jashpur. Acts of plunder, arson and murder went on unabated.<sup>2</sup>

Thus by 26 January, the tribal insurgents had "complete possession of the whole of [Chota] Nagpore, with the exception of some of the jungly tracts to the south of Palkote - Palkote khas (the residence of the Maharaja) and the villages of that Pergunnah, Bussea, the zemindary of Lohar Sing Barrack [Baraik] (forming part of the jageer of

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para. 11.

Gopeenanth Sahi uncle of the present Rajah [Maharaja], also to the south, and Peethowreah and the adjoining villages in the north east corner."<sup>1</sup>

The first check to the very rapid spread of the disturbances was imposed by Captain Wilkinson and his small force. They reached Rara (Rarah),<sup>2</sup> about half-way between Doesa and Ramgarh and a few miles short of Pitoria on 14 January 1832. A small party was pushed forward to safeguard Pitoria, while the gun bullocks, completely knocked up by the ascent of the ghats, recovered. Smoke and flames from the nearby villages indicated the presence of the insurgents, and on arrival at Pitoria (on 16 January) Wilkinson immediately sallied out to attack them at Kharkatta. News of his little victory there encouraged Lal Jit Nath Sahi of Gujnu (Gujnoo),<sup>3</sup> ten miles south-west of Pitoria, to oppose the insurgents. On the 18th he faced some six hundred of them, charging them with three followers, killing six and routing the rest.<sup>4</sup> A few days later Wilkinson came up with a party of seventy insurgents near Borea, his ten horsemen charged them with such force that they could not escape, and one

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para. 27. See the enclosed map, 'Sketch of Chuta Nagpore and its dependencies'. There is a hill chain between Pitoria and Rarah. According to A Subaltern 'Sketch of the Campaign', East India Journal, 185, Rarah was "a small village, or rather hamlet, situated between two ranges of hills."

3. Ibid. Also see Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 28, B.C. 1502/58891.

4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 29. B.C. 1502/58891. Also see Wilkinson to Neave, 20 Jan. 1832, B.C. 1362/54224.

was killed and thirty taken prisoner.<sup>1</sup>

These three minor successes, and the arrival of the magistrate Cuthbert with a considerable body of irregular foot and horse, turned the tide locally. The tribal mundas and pahans of 56 villages submitted,<sup>2</sup> and the suds on the northern borders of Chota-Nagpur were induced to stand firm in their villages. But the country in other quarters, (especially in the south) was entirely in the hands of the insurgents.

The presence of Wilkinson's detachment, and their minor successes thus gave heart to the districts round and to the north of Pitoria. But any further success was obviously dependent upon his timely reinforcement. Neave, the acting magistrate, had already asked Ghanshyam Singh, the Deo raja, to supply horsemen and matchlock men,<sup>3</sup> and twice advanced him Rs.1,000 for expenses. The 50th. Native Infantry, marching from Gorakhpur for Dinapur,<sup>was now</sup> diverted via Gaya to the Ramgarh district.<sup>4</sup> But Neave and Wilkinson felt this was still quite inadequate. "This force is wholly unequal to the task", wrote Neave<sup>5</sup> and he accordingly

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1. Wilkinson to Neave, 22 Jan. 1832, ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Neave to Govt., 14 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54223; Also see Neave to Govt., 23 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.

4. Military Deptt. to Judl. Deptt., 18 Jan. 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

5. Neave to Govt., 18 Jan. 1832, Para.2, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 67 of 31 Jan. 1832 (140  
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put in an urgent demand for a cavalry force from Benares. Wilkinson for his part felt that even these troops would be inadequate: "As it may not be practicable to furnish more than a battalion and a squadron of cavalry, I should deem it very advisable that at least five or six hundred Burkundazes and from 50 to 100 horsemen well armed should be employed under Gunsham Sing, who has volunteered his services and the sooner they reach my camp the better."<sup>1</sup> A new difficulty was also making itself felt - a shortage of supplies, most of which had been carried off or destroyed by the insurgents.<sup>2</sup> Neave had, therefore, to appoint an active officer to create a depôt at Hazaribagh. He sent the nazir to collect supplies at Chatra, while Mitrabhan Singh, son of the Raja of Deo, also brought in provisions as well as troops.

Thus supplied and reinforced, Wilkinson was able to rout a force of some 3,000 insurgents advancing upon Pitoria.<sup>3</sup> But meanwhile rebellion had spread to the five parganas, below the ghats - Tamar, Rahi, Bundu, Silli, and Baranda<sup>4</sup> - the dependencies of the Chota-Nagpur maharaja,

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1. Wilkinson to Neave, 20 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.
  2. Neave to Govt., 23 Jan. 1832, Ibid.
  3. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.30, B.C.1502/58891.
  4. Ibid. Para.13. Also See the enclosed map, 'Sketch of Chûta Nagpore and its dependencies'.

on the immediate borders of the Jungle Mahals and Singhbhum. The Sonepur insurgents had entered this area on 16 January, and had since been joined by several village and circle tribal leaders: Lakhi Das of Kachi, Dasai Manki and their followers. They first threatened the Raja of Bundu, who lost heart when he found that his mundas and mankis under Lakhi Das had deserted. He fled with his family to Jhalda in the Jungle Mahals. On 18 January the insurgents captured the rich town of Bundunagar. For four days they plundered the enormous wealth of the mahajans and then burned it down.<sup>1</sup> Three Pathans and two other foreigners were done to death, and within a few days the houses of all the non-tribal people of the whole pargana had been destroyed.<sup>2</sup> (Strangely enough, they spared the raja's house, presumably as a token of respect to their recently hinduized chief).

When the Raja of Rahi heard about the burning of Bundu and found his own mundas and mankis hostile to him, he also fled with his family to Bagankodar in the Jungle Mahals. On the 17th, the tribal people of the area plundered the houses of all the non-tribal people in the villages of Baranda and Rahi. The houses of the raja, and of the

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.13, B.C. 1502/58891.

2. Ibid.

tikait, or guardian of the pass, who had fled with the raja, were, however, spared. In the adjoining pargana of Khas Silli the story was the same: all the houses of the suds were plundered and destroyed, the tribal people of Silli, Banta Hajam, Bundu, Rahi and Baranda all taking part. The Raja of Silli had already taken shelter in Kulma in Jhalda. Once again the house of the raja was spared, and by the 23rd, when the insurgents from outside the pargana had moved on, he was able to return to it. In the 12 villages of Banta Hajam, belonging to the Pachet raja, the same scenes were enacted on January 17. The houses of Paryag Sahu and other wealthy inhabitants, who fortunately had escaped, were plundered and burned.

Only a week after these events, Tori pargana on the north-west borders of Chota-Nagpur proper, and Tamar on the south-east were disturbed. On 24 January the Bhogta and Ghasi tribes of Tori, 'imitating the example of the Coles of Nagpore who had joined them' <sup>1</sup> rose in arms. They took possession of the Hutap ghat and plundered and burned many villages below that pass. Those who tried to pass the ghat were plundered and killed. The daroga of Udaiganj thana had already fled and many peaceful inhabitants were now flying for shelter and safety.

Soon Tamar khas and the villages of the pargana

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1. Ibid. Para.12.

were attacked, plundered and burned. The tribesmen of this hilly area under their mankis and mundas, who had deserted the rani, took part in the devastation. At the outset the rani resisted the insurgents with 300 men of Thakur Chetan Singh of Kharsawan and Lachhuman Singh of Tarai. The assailants were repelled and some of them were killed. But ultimately the rani left her residence which was burned. "This forms a solitary instance of the house of a Rajah being destroyed and is thus accounted for namely that the other Rajahs left people to protect their houses while the Tamar Rannie was alone deserted by all."<sup>1</sup> The main booty was secured from the town of Tamar and the bhandar (khas) villages. One mahajan in the town of Tamar and some three of Janampuri, the estate of Tribhuvan Manki, were murdered. Sarjandihi, the estate of Thakur Borhan Singh, who had not deserted the rani, was also plundered and burned. Lachhuman Singh, who had also openly assisted the rani, was able, however, to protect his villages.

Though Singhbhum itself, to the south-east corner of Chota-Nagpur proper, was not disturbed in this period, the Larka Kols of this area, famous for their martial spirit, were the chief supporters of the Dhangar Kols of Chota-

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1. Ibid. Para. 17.

Nagpur. The latter purposely circulated rumours that more and more Larkas were arriving<sup>1</sup> so that the people might be overawed. The Larkas of Bandgaon under Bindrai Manki, a man of daring character, and Sui Munda of Godarpiri and several others of Singhbhum first came to the aid of their brethren of Sonepur. Moreover, the tribesmen of Kochang and Jamur had participated in the outrages, probably at the behest of Dasai Manki and Katik Sardar, the heads of these villages. Other leaders were Mohan Manki, Sagar Manki, Sarga Manki, and Nagu Pahan, a daring man of Saradkel.<sup>2</sup> The Rautias in general in Sonepur, Basia and other southern parts of Chota-Nagpur first gave them moral support, but later took an active part in the plundering excursions. Of these Kamal Singh Baraik of Turpa patti, and a landholder of Singhbhum too, who had harassed Kunwar Harnath Sahi at the very beginning of the disturbances,<sup>3</sup> was the most prominent. All the mankis and mundas of the five parganas, except Lachhuman Singh and Borhan Singh, were actively concerned in the perpetration of heinous crimes.

Thus from mid-January almost the whole of Chota-Nagpur proper and its five dependencies were at the mercy

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1. Wilkinson to Neave, 20 Jan. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.21, B.C.1502/58891.

3. Statement, Kunwar Harnath Sahi, 28 Feb. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

of the insurgents and so remained till the arrival of sufficient troops from outside. Wilkinson at Pitoria could not do much, at least he could not act offensively.<sup>1</sup> As the Acting Magistrate of Ramgarh reported, "Notwithstanding what that officer has effected in his own immediate neighbourhood, the general state of the pergunnah remains much the same."<sup>2</sup> He further reported, "The insurgents are in several large bodies and commit their horrid outrages in various parts of the country, at the same time. The respectable part of the inhabitants have fled into the jungles, and the police have come for protection below the ghats."<sup>3</sup>

By the end of January the first troops from outside Chota-Nagpur began to arrive. Captain Maltby with 100 men of the 2nd Infantry from Dinapur and a body of horsemen and barkandazes, which had been recruited by Neave at Sherghati, entered Tori on 28 January and reached Tikoo, just above the ghats, on the 30th. Captain Wilkinson had already been reinforced by 200 matchlockmen and 50 horses under the command of Mitrabhan Singh of Deo on 25 January.

1. Bengal Hurkaru, 23 Jan. 1832.

2. Neave to Patna Commissioner, 25 Jan. 1832, Para.1, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 7 Feb. 1832. ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )

3. Ibid. He wrote in another letter; 'From absence of troops and the great distance of the stations whence they are procurable, the Pergunnah of Chota Nagpore has been for one month in the hands of the Insurgents, and no resistance has been made'. Neave to Lambert, 27 Jan. 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 76 of 31 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )

Moreover Maharaja Mitrajit Singh of Tekari in the district of Bihar (now in Gaya) supplied 300 barkandazes with 200 cavalry, his nephew Bishun Singh supplied 70 cavalry and 150 barkandazes, and his illegitimate son, Raja Khan Bahadur Khan, also came forward with his 300 men.<sup>1</sup>

To meet Wilkinson's urgent need for supplies Neave made further advances to the police officers and to 'respectable' landholders. An establishment of two hundred and fifty oxen with their drivers for the conveyance of these supplies was kept ready. At Chatra the collector's nazir was posted to superintend the collection of grain etc.<sup>2</sup> He also arranged supplies for the cavalry contingent coming from Benares, establishing chaukis, or depôts, at Nabinagar, Aurangabad, Daudnagar, Gaya and Chatra so that sufficient necessaries (e.g. grains like gram, Dal ghee, salt, etc.) might be collected from the neighbouring bazars and forwarded to camp by bullocks.<sup>3</sup>

By now the Bengal Government had realized the gravity of the situation and accordingly it directed the following detachments to march towards the disturbed areas: "From Barrackpore, a Regiment of Native Infantry (the 34th.

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1. Reformer, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 12 March 1832: The Reformer commented that while the Muslims had risen against the British at Baraset, these Hindu gentlemen (One of them was partly Muslim) willingly and promptly came forward in support of the Government, thus maintaining the tradition of Jagat Seth and others who had aided the British in the battle of Plassey.
  2. Neave to Lambert, 25 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.
  3. Neave to Lambert, 29 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54223.

Regiment) proceeded on duty joined by a brigade of horse Artillery from Dum Dum. From Midnapore, a detachment of 300 men of the 38th Regiment Native Infantry stationed at that place could furnish one of that strength, if not, the Detachment to be as strong as the Regiment could supply. The detachment actually sent consisted of 2 companies."<sup>1</sup> These reinforcements had been ordered because news had arrived of the spread of the insurrection to Tori and Palamau parganas on the north-western borders of Chota-Nagpur. By 27 January the whole of the Tori pargana was in revolt.<sup>2</sup> The daroga of Armai had been compelled to flee into Palamau for asylum. The pargana of Barwa had been plundered and burnt and thereafter the insurgents had moved towards Palamau.<sup>3</sup> Then on 28 January the Government was further informed about an extension of the outrages to Lohardugga and Tikoo on the one hand, and to the five dependent parganas (Tamar, Bundu, Rahi, Baranda and Silli) on the other.<sup>4</sup> The Barrackpur detachment was thereupon ordered to

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1. Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, Para. 12, Ibid. Also see Bengal Hurkaru, 1 Feb. 1832: Col. Bowen was commanding the troops from Barrackpur.
  2. Lambert to Govt., 29 Jan. 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 75 of 31 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )
  3. Neave to Lambert, 30 Jan. 1832, Para. 2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 10 of 7 Feb. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )
  4. Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, Para. 12, B.C. 1362/54223.



communicate immediately with the joint commissioners and to act in cooperation with them, and the Midnapur detachment to communicate, in the first instance, with the magistrate of Bankura. Moreover, to ensure cooperation and combination of movement on the part of all the forces proceeding to the disturbed areas, the Government ordered on 1 February that the commanding officers were to communicate with the commissioners and to proceed as they might point out. The seniormost military officer would, of course, assume the command of actual military operations, but in other respects, he and all other officers were to be guided by the commissioners.<sup>1</sup>

The hands of the Joint Commissioners had already been strengthened by the grant of special powers "to apprehend, try and bring to immediate punishment without further reference to Government all persons whom you may find in open resistance to the civil power."<sup>2</sup> To guide them in the exercise of these emergency powers, they were instructed that "when the emergency might appear to them such as to render necessary or expedient the employment of prompt and vigorous measures, they might avail themselves of the special powers, but when they might be of opinion that

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1. Ibid. Para.13.

2. Govt. to Cuthbert, 24 Jan. 1832, Para.1. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 61 of 24 Jan. 1832. (140) Cuthbert and Wilkinson formed the special commission in this period.

the offenders could, without detriment to the public interests, be left to be disposed of under the ordinary rules for the administration of criminal justice, they should proceed against them according to established form."<sup>1</sup> Neave, however, was not given any extra-ordinary powers, and when he urged that the deplorable state of Tori required a proclamation of martial law - and seemed inclined to make such a proclamation on his own responsibility - he was told not to exercise such powers without the express sanction of the Government.<sup>2</sup>

*Jhalda*  
Patkum, Bagmundi, Hasla and Bagmundi:-

While Wilkinson, from Pitoria, was attempting to check the revolt in Ramgarh, and troops were on the move to deal with the outbreak in Tori, Palamau and the five dependent parganas, unrest had flared up in Patkum, the pargana which formed the most south-westerly part of the Jungle Mahals. It was in this pargana that the refugees from Chota-Nagpur, and then from Tamar, Bundu and Rahi, which lay immediately to the west of Patkum, had sought asylum. Russell, the Jungle Mahals magistrate, had been warned of the approach of the insurgents by the zamindars of his

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1. Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832. Para. 9, B.C.1362/59224.
  2. Lambert to Govt., 29 Jan. 1832, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 75 of 31 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ ) Also see Govt. to Lambert, 31 Jan. 1832, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 77 of 31 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )

district's western borders,<sup>1</sup> and on 23 January two messengers arrived from the Rani of Patkum to report to her husband, who was with Russell at headquarters at Bankura, that insurgents had invaded Patkum and burnt down three villages.<sup>2</sup> On the 24th. Russell wrote to Midnapur, 55 miles south of Bankura, for military assistance. He pointed out that "the detachment out against them [the insurgents] from Hazareebang is small, and consequently not of sufficient strength to be divided into parties until reinforcements arrive, and as the extent of country these marauders are plundering is considerable, and they have commenced their outrages in this district, I deem it proper to apply to you direct, and to request that you will with all despatch forward what disposable force you have at your command into pergunnah Patcoom, through Burrabhoom, to cooperate with Captain Wilkinson and to oppose any extensive descent of these insurgents into this district."<sup>3</sup>

The Bengal Government, however, obviously thought Russell alarmist and told him that his requisition was

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1. Hasla, Jhalda, Bagankodar, Bagmundi and Jaipur.
  2. Russell, Magistrate, Jungle Mahals, to Govt., 23 Jan. 1832, B.C. 1832, B.C. 1363/54226.
  3. Russell to officer commanding at Midnapur, 24 Jan. 1832, Ibid. He also wrote to the Ramgarh Magistrate and to the political Agent at Hagaribagh, 120 miles northwest from Bankura, asking the latter to send a party of sepoy to preserve the lives and property of the inhabitants: Russell to Wilkinson, 23 Jan. 1832, Ibid. At the same time he sent a daroga to Jhalda and another to Patkum with instructions to the zamindars of that area to stand against the insurgents.

unnecessary as sufficient military force had already been placed at the disposal of the civil authorities. They cancelled the leave of Martin, Russell's assistant, and ordered him to proceed by dak to the Jungle Mahals headquarters.<sup>1</sup> They told Russell, "For the protection of your own district you will of course call upon the zemindars of Patcoom, Jaldeah [Jhalda] and the other estates bordering on the scene of the disturbances to summon all the pykes[sic] at their disposal, and to aid you in opposing the insurgents, and in maintaining the peace of the district."<sup>2</sup> If the disturbances continued, Russell was to hand over the charge of his office at the headquarters to Martin and was to proceed himself to the spot. He was further directed to consult for his guidance the proceedings of the years 1806 to 1808 under Blunt<sup>3</sup> when similar disturbances had occurred in this area.

Thus reproved by Bengal Government, Russell wrote to the officer commanding at Midnapur to stop the march of any military force.<sup>4</sup> However, it remained his firm conviction that the military force in Ramgarh was insufficient to cope with the situation. He had at his command at Bankura, besides the ghatwals, only the barkandazes who had belonged to the late provincial battalion. He thought that his pro-

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1. Govt. to Martin, 24 Jan. 1832, Ibid.

2. Govt. to Russell, 24 Jan. 1832, Ibid.

3. Blunt, the third member of the Governor-General's Council at this time, was the Magistrate of the Jungle Mahals in 1806-1810.

4. Russell to Govt., 26 Jan. 1832, Ibid. B.C. 1363/5425.

ceeding to the disturbed area with only these indifferent men, and unaided by some military force, would be of no avail. He proposed, however, to place a sufficient number of hired men for the protection of the Bankura jail incase he had to go to Patkum with the matchlockmen.<sup>1</sup>

Russell's forebodings soon began to seem justified. The houses of those who were in the employ of the Patkum zamindar were burnt in several villages. Four more villages in western Patkum, on the other side of the Subarnarekha river, were destroyed, and on 23 January Elu, the chief village of the Hasla pargana, seven kos from Patkum, was devastated. Between Wilkinson with his little force at Pitoria and Patkum, fifty hilly, difficult miles to the south-east, the insurgents were sweeping through the parganas of Bundu, Baranda and Silli. Though Russell had sent parwanas to the zamindars of the area to take courage and to arm their paiks for resistance,<sup>2</sup> most of them were in a state of great alarm and preparing to flee. Out of the zamindars of Patkum, Torang, Bagmundi, Hasla and Jhalda, the bordering parganas of his district, he found only the zamindar of the last-mentioned pargana ready to act, aided by the chiefs of Jaipur and Bargankodar. The zamindar of Pachet was in a deplorable state of mind and nothing could be expected from

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1. Ibid.

2. Russell to Govt., 29 Jan. 1832, B.C.1363/54226.

him.<sup>1</sup>

On 29 January Russell wrote again to Midnapur for military assistance. This time he had the support of the Burdwan commissioner, who expressed his willingness himself to proceed to Bankura. Accordingly two companies of the 38th N.I. set out under Captain Horsburgh from Midnapur, via Bishnupur and Bankura.<sup>2</sup> Russell had also learnt from Dent that a regiment had been ordered to Ramgarh from Barrackpur,<sup>3</sup> and the Bengal Government, confirming its despatch, asked Russell to provide the requisite supplies for the regiment when it passed through his district.<sup>4</sup> It was therefore with some confidence that he joined Horsborough's detachment and marched with it to Patkum, where they arrived on 12 February.<sup>5</sup> (Wilkinson, urging that great caution should be exercised in any further advance towards him, suggested that for the time being the two companies should be held at Patkum for the protection of the Jungle Mahals).<sup>6</sup>

With the arrival of the troops the disturbances rapidly subsided, and Russell threw himself heart and soul into the task of restoring order, investigating the outbreaks and preparing a report upon them. This work took

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Also see W. Braddon, Burdwan Commissioner, to Govt., 27 Jan. 1832, B.C.1363/54226.

3. Russell to Govt., 30 Jan. 1832, Ibid.

4. Govt. to Russell, 30 Jan. 1832, Ibid.

5. Russell to Govt., 13 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

6. Ramgarh Magt. to Russell, 1 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

more than two months and his assistant Martin remained in charge of the Bankura civil station in this period. Russell assembled a considerable force of armed men from the interior of the district, consisting of barkandazes and others, and he was authorized by the Bengal Government to give them diet allowance and suitable remuneration. But his requisition of elephants and tents from the zamindars was not approved.

On 22 March Russell reported that he had completed his investigation, that he had recovered more than 1,200 head of cattle about 6,000 maunds of grain, and that he had taken more than 650 prisoners, eighty of them for the attack on Elu alone.<sup>1</sup> The most important of these prisoners was the zamindar of Jhalda, whom Russell had arrested as a principal fomenter of the disturbance at Elu. Russell's investigations also implicated the Diwan of the Patkum zamindar, and his dependent chiefs and ghatwals, and in Bagmundi pargana the brother of the late zamindar.

It seems certain that the disturbance ceased so quickly in this area because of the decisive action taken by Russell. As Russell reported, "On the 4th day and when the system of plunder was still continuing, a rumour was spread abroad that the magistrate was proceeding to Patcoom with a military force, on hearing which the Ghautwals with

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1. Russell to Govt., 22 March 1832, Ibid.

the view of extricating themselves from the dilemma in which they had fallen and to make it appear that they had taken no part in the disturbances and to throw all the odium on the Coles, concerted a scheme for the apprehension of the party which had entered the purgunnah at their invitation."<sup>1</sup> "If it had not been for the rumour of troops marching through the district," Russell went on, "the disturbances would have also spread into other pergunnahs, [of the Jungle Mahals] where the police is invested in the landholders and where there are no regular police Thannahs."<sup>2</sup>

#### Palamau and Tori:-

When in January 1832 the tribal people of Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies were carrying fire and sword against the non-tribal people the Company's officials attempted to check their progress by using against them their kinsmen in Palamau, the cheros and kharwars who "had ever been celebrated as good fighters."<sup>3</sup> But no sooner had the jagirdars of Palamau assembled their tribal militia at Leslieganj than news came (on 26 January) that the Kols were planning an incursion into Palamau as well. So the jagirdars were asked to defend their own ghats instead of marching for

1. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.4. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.16.

3. Neave to Jt.Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, Para.3A, B.C. 1363/54228: Parwanas were issued to the principal jagirdars of Palamau to assemble their men at Leslieganj and then to set out to Chota-Nagpur via Chatra.



the protection of the neighbouring parganas.

The ghats at which the insurgent kols were said to be aiming were those of Tissa and Rania, and many of the peaceable settlers, fearing that Chechari would be attacked from the south, began to flee northwards. Neave, the Assistant Magistrate of Ramgarh, attempted to prevent any such attack by calling on the raja and jagirdars of the area as well as the darogas of Leslieganj and Tarhasi to defend the ghats. The jagirdars of Chechari and ~~Sirna~~ accordingly proceeded to close the approaches to their jagirs effectively. The daroga of Leslieganj also collected a hundred cheros with matchlocks and took them to protect the defiles leading from the Tissa ghat on 28 January. Moreover, at the suggestion of many dependable persons in Palamau, Neave advanced a sum of five hundred rupees for hiring barkandazes to Raja Ran Bahadur Rai, whose family, though disposed of its zamindari in 1813, still possessed some influence.<sup>1</sup>

The attempt to halt the Chota-Nagpur insurgents failed. The first breach occurred at the Tissa ghat, through which Thakur Udainath Singh and Lal Maninath Sahi of Jugi were pursued. The ghatwal at Tissa, chamar Sahi, held his ground for a while against the insurgents, but eventually

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1. Neave to Lambert, 30 Jan. 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons. 10 of 7 Feb. 1832 (140<sub>3</sub>) This action of Neave was criticised by Major Sutherland as 'dangerous' probably because relying on the false report from the ganungo, Sutherland thought that Raja Ran Bahadur might himself rebel after getting the money. See Sutherland to Govt., N.D., B.C. 1363/54227.

under heavy pressure had to yield. Once he had done so, perhaps feeling compromised, he proceeded to join the rebels, and became one of their most active leaders.<sup>1</sup> His example proved infectious. After a week on the borders of Palamau awaiting a suitable moment for attack the insurgents had won over a number of the Kharwar leaders and other tribal chiefs who had entertained them. Soon all the tribal people came to terms with them, and on 7 February the attack on Palamau began, led by the Kol Bhutnath of Sazardi and the cheros, kharwars and Poliars of Palamau under Dakhin Sahi, a relation of Chamar Sahi, the Tissa ghatwal.<sup>2</sup> On that day the villages of Ichak, Bari and Mankiari were all burnt and the force of Raja Ran Bahadur driven back with much loss. The attempt to use tribal people to oppose tribal insurgents had thus broken down, and Neave had to report to Patna that the Chota-Nagpur kols were busy trying to excite the lower to rise against the higher orders.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, at this time the detachment from Benares, for which Neave had put in a requisition in the middle of January, was in the neighbourhood of Palamau in the north in the Shahabad district. Therefore, as a preventive measure, Neave directed the march of two companies of the 54th regi-

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1. Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, Para.3C, B.C.1363/54228.

2. Ibid.

3. Neave to Lambert, 4 Feb. 1832, Para.1, B.C.1362/54224; Lambert to Govt., 6 Feb. 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, Para.26, B.C.1362/54223.

ment direct to Palamau, though the remainder of the 3rd regiment of Light Infantry had to be directed to halt at Sasaram, 75 miles north of Palamau, due to the shortage of supplies.<sup>1</sup>

The disturbances in Palamau thereafter spread like wild-fire. The kols had entered the area in two places. Most of the jagirdars, who were holding land on condition of performing military service, shirked from hazarding a fight.<sup>2</sup> Neave, therefore, recommended that their lands should be confiscated.<sup>3</sup> Unable to expect any assistance locally, Neave asked Captain Angelo, commanding the 3rd Light Cavalry, to detach a small force into Palamau pargana to prevent the further spread of the unrest.<sup>4</sup> Angelo replied that as he had guns with him he could not divide his force. He added that he had the Chota-Nagpur special commissioner's request to proceed to Pitoria with all speed. Neave's request was, therefore, not attended to.<sup>4</sup>

Neave was not satisfied with this refusal, and wrote to Lambert to express his fear that without a military force

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1. Neave to Lambert, 4 Feb. 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 22 of 14 Feb. 1832. ( $\frac{140}{4}$ )
  2. Neave to Lambert, 5 Feb. 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 27 of 14 Feb. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{4}$ ) Only two of them had come forward to check the progress of the insurgents.
  3. He was asked by Commissioner Lambert to submit a further report on this to the Government: Lambert to Govt., 7 Feb. 1832, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 26 of 14 Feb. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{4}$ )
  4. See Neave to Govt., 27 Feb. 1832, Para.9, B.C.1362/54224.

Palamau would go the way of Chota-Nagpur. Because of the hill barrier between Chota-Nagpur and Palamau any British activity in the former area had little effect in the latter: success in Chota-Nagpur would do little to encourage the jagirdars of Palamau - certainly not as much as the presence of a detachment of troops. If the jagirdars persisted in their cowardice and the pargana was overrun then the supplies for the troops in Chota-Nagpur would be endangered and there would also be a great loss of revenue.<sup>1</sup> Why then when a regiment and guns from Calcutta and a detachment from Midnapur were on their way should a detachment not be spared for Palamau?

However, the approach of the troops had a good moral effect. The large-scale work of destruction stopped, though one more village was burnt. Raja Ran Bahadur, provided with ammunition by Neave, and the jagirdars now began to exert themselves. The raja marched to the burnt village immediately.

But the more favourable turn of events was short-lived, for the withdrawal of troops from Tori was followed by further disturbances. "The lower classes," Neave reported, "have evidently entered into a combination with the Coles and immediately on the departure of troops, they recommence the old system of burning, plundering and killing."<sup>2</sup> The police, temporarily re-established by military force at

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1. Neave to Lambert, 7 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

2. Neave to Lambert, 10 Feb. 1832, Para.3. B.C.1362/54225.

Udaiganj, was again dislocated and could afford no protection to the people against the crimes being perpetrated, Neave, therefore, wrote to the commissioner about his helplessness in the absence of any troops at his command. Lambert did on this occasion sanction a request to Captain Wilkinson to detach a party of troops for the protection of that pargana.<sup>1</sup> The worsening of the situation in Palamau, just when the jagirdars had begun to make headway against the insurgents, was more directly due, however, to the intrigues of subordinate officials of the collector's office posted at Leslieganj, "to which may be said to have been sacrificed the peace of the country."<sup>2</sup> The ganungo, Gauri charan, and the sheristadar, Alam Chand, contrary to Neave's orders, did not allow the jagirdars, who had assembled at Leslieganj, to blockade the advancing rebel armies at the ghats. Moreover, they continued to send false reports to Neave from 31 January till the middle of February. The forces of the jagirdars were divided because of this duplicity of the subordinate staff.

Nevertheless, Raja Ran Bahadur did march to the Jhabe Ghat and thence to Chechari with about 300 Chero and Kharwar barkandazes, some fifty Pathans and a few Brahmans. He was joined by the Leslieganj daroga and some barkandazes

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1. Lambert to Govt., 11 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

2. Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apr. 1832, Para. 3E, B.C.1363/54228.

as well. But the sheristadar and the ganungo did not allow most of the barkandazes at Leslienganj to join the raja in spite of his repeated requests. Still the raja followed up the insurgents. Even when on 8 February the tribal followers of the raja deserted him to join the rebel army, the raja did not lose heart and with Babu Chhatradhari Singh, Jagmohan Singh and Bhawani Baksha Rai, and with his Pathnas and Brahmans, "rushed on the enemy and fought most bravely until they actually put to flight the Coles."<sup>1</sup> However when the victors were taking their meal at ease, the united body of Cheros, Kharwars and others fell on them and slew fourteen men. Again the raja requested the nazir and sheristadar at Leslienganj to send the barkandazes but once again they would not pay any heed. Thereupon the raja, in utter disgust, left for his home at Shahpur.

The treachery, or selfish timidity of the sheristadar and his accomplice was not at once discovered, for they concealed their misconduct by producing on 13 February a slanderous and alarming report, accusing the raja of complicity in the insurgent's crimes. They even denied that he had ever fought a battle at all, stating rather that he had run away with all his men. It was not till some time later that the report was exposed as false and the two officials were punished, and meanwhile their treachery had led to disaster, for with the raja's withdrawal, and that of the other

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1. Ibid.

aggrieved jagirdars, the Kols were left at liberty to plunder and burn without check,<sup>1</sup> while the sheristadar and other officials abandoned their posts - to save the official papers.

Lambert, on receipt of the alarming reports, asked Neave to send an express requisition to the Brigadier General commanding at Benares, for such additional military force as could be spared. He also informed Neave that he had ordered a direct dâk to be established for immediate communication with Sherghati.<sup>2</sup> Lambert also wrote directly to the Brigadier General commanding at Dinapur to ask whether there was any military force there for the protection of the disturbed areas.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile the insurgents were reported to be in force near Satbarwa, 10~~0~~ miles from Leslieganj, and the inhabitants of Palamau, failing completely to live up to their fighting reputation, began to flee. Their flight had naturally a demoralising effect on the people of the neighbouring pargana of Tori which had already been devastated twice. The insurgents had approached Chiteri, Barahatu and Jaberā, and the shopkeepers were ready to flee away. Since the chiteri was a depôt for supplies for the troops, its desertion would be a severe calamity.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Neave to Lambert, 14 Feb. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1362/54225.

2. Lambert to Neave, 14 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

3. Lambert to Govt., 14 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

4. Neave to Lambert, 11 Feb. 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 9 of 21 Feb. 1832 (140  
4)

Neave's idea of employing the 3rd Light Cavalry in Palamau was now supported by Wilkinson.<sup>1</sup> One of the squadrons, Neave wrote on 14 February, had already moved into Palamau on 10 February and the second under Colonel Hawtrey, he thought, might be kept at Sherghati to protect the areas of Bihar north of Palamau. True, thousands of barkandazes could be recruited, but Neave had little confidence in such a corps, especially after Captain Matby's experience of their conduct, and after their desertion while fighting on the raja's side. (The tribal levy of the raja had first refused to fire and then fled and the non-tribal followers were surprised by a body of 5,000 insurgents, including 1,000 Ashrafs (respectable men or small jagirdars), armed with matchlocks, and 25 horsemen with spears).<sup>2</sup>

At such a critical juncture, Lambert learnt with dismay that there was no disposable force at Dinapur and that the 64th N.I. was only due to arrive there after a fortnight.<sup>3</sup> So from Gaya he went to Sherghati and conferred with Neave and Lt.Col. Hawtrey of the 3rd Light Cavalry on 16 February. It was then decided that Hawtrey should march with the remaining squadron of his regiment to pargana Tori. This squadron would then remain there and that under

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1. Neave took a certain pleasure in pointing out that had his request for the aid of Captain Angelo's forces been met, the danger could already have been averted: Neave to Lambert, 12 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  2. Neave to Lambert, 14 Feb. 1832, Postscript, Ibid.
  3. Brigadier General O'Halloran to Lambert, 16 Feb. 1832, Ibid.



It. Drummond would stay in Palamau until instructions came from the special commissioners. It was hoped that the road to Tikoo from Sherghati, a distance of 56 miles to the south, could thus be kept open for carrying supplies for Impey's detachment at Tikoo and Wilkinson's headquarters at Pitoria.<sup>1</sup> Lambert, moreover, requested the Government to sanction the further requisition of troops from Benares and Dinapur.

On 16 February the special (joint) commissioners at Pitoria instructed the officer commanding the 3rd Light cavalry that the squadron under Drummond, which had proceeded to Palamau, should remain as near to the Tissa Ghat as possible so that he could easily join the right column of the force at Lohardugga.<sup>2</sup> But when that very day they heard from Neave that the insurgents had further penetrated into Palamau, they asked Hawtrey to proceed to Palamau to "attack and slay the insurgents."<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of these instructions from the Patna commissioner and the joint commissioners, Neave requested Hawtrey to proceed first to Tori where the conditions were worst. He wrote, "your being in that Pergunnah will keep open our communication with Tikoo. You will be able to communicate with Lieutt. Drummond in Palamow, and you will likewise be near at hand, should your assistance be required to the southward."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Lambert to Govt., 16 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

2. Jt. Commissioners to Hawtrey, 16 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

3. Ibid. Postscript.

4. Neave to Hawtrey, 17 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

When Hawtrey with his squadron left Sherghati for Tori, Neave realized that the protection of the former place and of the areas adjoining it was also necessary, and he wrote to the commissioner asking that "a requisition for some further aid be made, from whatever quarter you may suggest; I should think two companies of Infantry would be sufficient for the purpose."<sup>1</sup> He stated further that Tori was in turmoil, while Palamau was tranquil, but he was not sure whether the tranquillity in Palamau would last: "There has been nothing so prominent in the whole of this business as the singular variation of affairs daily, nay hourly, so that it has happened, that I was signing a letter of congratulation on the apparent approach of tranquillity I have received intelligence of reverses and fresh disturbances. We must not therefore too highly estimate this peaceful state of Palamow."<sup>2</sup> This was to prove a truly prophetic utterance!

On 18 February, Hawtrey and his squadron entered Tori pargana, leaving Drummond to ensure the continued tranquillity of Palamau. Three days later Neave was told by the Raja of Kunda, twelve miles west of Chatra, that a body of insurgents was at the foot of the ghats leading from his estate, to Palamau on the west.<sup>3</sup> But neither he nor Drummond was able to secure further information as the scoundrelly sheristadar at Leslieganj had set Drummond and the jagirdars

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1. Neave to Lambert, 17 Feb. 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.5.

3. Neave to Lambert, 21 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.  
Also see Lambert to Neave, 22 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

at odds and had prevented any news getting through to him.<sup>1</sup> Neave was thus still reporting Palamau calm when insurgents had entered the pargana and driven Drummond's forces back.

The check to Drummond's squadron had occurred on the 22nd. He had received information the previous evening of insurgents plundering Satbarwa, <sup>ten</sup>~~eleven~~ miles south of Leslieganj, and six miles east of Palamau, and had despatched a body of troops under Lieutenant Marsh against them. On the morning of the 22nd Marsh found them in the open, and charging, easily dispersed them.<sup>2</sup> But during the pursuit a further body of insurgents, this time six or seven thousand strong, was discovered, and it was soon seen that they were heading for the Chitma pass with the obvious intention of cutting off the retreat of the troops to camp. As the troops were entrapped in a hollow surrounded by immense hills and impenetrable jungle, they were obliged to force the ghat. The cavalry found itself helpless, faced with a shower of arrows, matchlocks and other missiles from all sides against which the troops could do nothing in reply because all their ammunitions had been spent. Consequently one jamadar, one sepoy and two horses were killed and one Naik, three sepoy and six horses wounded.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, Para. 31, B.C. 1363/45228.

2. H. Drummond to Neave, 22 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1362/54225. According to 'A loyal jageerdar' close to the camp, 28 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 13 March 1832, this encounter took place on 21 February and the number of the insurgents was 8 to 10,000 in Goles of 1,5000 to 2,000 each.

3. Drummond to Neave, 22 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1362/54225.

Drummond hurried from Leslieganj with the remaining forces as soon as he heard about the reverse and covered the advanced party in its retreat. Back in camp the officers unanimously decided in a council that the ghat on the road to Sherghati should be instantly passed to prevent a similar ambush and to secure communications with Sherghati. Drummond wrote to Neave that as it was impossible to contend against such a superior insurgent force, he thought it useless to remain at Leslieganj. He, therefore, requested immediate re-inforcements so that he could proceed to Sherghati with his cavalry. If the relief did not come, he warned, he would proceed in forced marches without it.<sup>1</sup>

Neave's response was to set out next day, 24 February, from Sherghati with 50 men of the late Patna Provincial battalion and about 200 men armed with matchlocks. He joined Drummond's detachment at Manatu, 16 kos south of Sherghati and 8 north of Leslieganj.<sup>2</sup> That same day Lathurna and other villages south of Leslieganj were destroyed, and then Leslieganj itself. On the 25th the squadron pushed on as far as the burning villages near Tarhasi, but found nobody.<sup>3</sup> On the 27th a further 50 provincial sepoy and irregular barkandazes arrived from Sherghati.

The reverse suffered by Marsh had shown that cavalry could not with safety operate alone - Hawtrey, when moving

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1. Ibid.

2. Lambert to Govt., 25 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

3. Lambert to Govt., 27 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

into Tori, had asked for a small detachment of infantry to be placed at his disposal<sup>1</sup>—and also suggested that the Bengal Government's expressed dislike of the splitting up of the cavalry forces into small detachments was well founded.<sup>2</sup> But more important still, the reverse emphasized the necessity for carrying the jagirdars with the Company and so securing timely intelligence and the cooperation of those who knew the country-side. The most important service rendered by Neave was to expose the criminal folly of the sheristadar and qanungo of Leslieganj, to get rid of them, and so to secure the cooperation of the jagirdar once more. That done the Palamau insurrection came speedily to an end.

The second phase of unrest in Palamau had been largely confined to the Mankiari and Manka parganas, where the local tribesmen had been led by Chamar Singh of Bariatu, Hukum Singh and Haril Singh of Jer and a few others.<sup>3</sup> After

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1. Lt.Col. Hawtrey to Jt.Commissioners, 18 Feb. 1832, Ibid.
  2. The Bengal Government had disliked the splitting of Captain Angelo's 3rd Light cavalry into two, and they had demanded an explanation from Neave. (Govt. to Neave, 14 Feb. 1832, Bengal Cro. Judl. Cons. 37 of 14 Feb. 1832 (140). When they got the detailed explanation from Neave (Neave to Govt., 27 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224) they thanked him for his exertions, and cleared him from the charge of having misguidedly directed Captain Maltby's change of route, but he was found to have frustrated, though not wilfully, the intention of the Government to effect an early junction of troops. (Govt. to Neave, 6 March 1832, Ibid.) (Already on 27 February they had drawn the attention of the Joint Commissioners to "the cavalry in Palamau and Toree being without Infantry, and the Infantry in Tamar without cavalry." B.C.1362/54225.)
  3. Neave to Jt.Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, Para.3E, B.C.1363/54228.

Neave's junction with Drummond the Kols from outside the area returned to Chota-Nagpur, declaring that they had borne the brunt of the two battles at Chitma and Latehar and that at Leslieganj the Cheros and Kharwars, the local tribesmen, alone had perpetrated the depredations. So long as the kols were in the area, the local tribesmen were encouraged to action and felt free to enact any ghastly scene in their name. After the withdrawal of the Kols, however, that support and that alibi were alike lost, while most of the leaders, who were the brains behind these outrages, were captured by the troops.

The return of Colonel Hawtrey to the support of Drummond on 27 February and the arrival of the advance guard of the 64th, and then of Lt.Col.Hamilton with the other five companies of the 64th on 5 March,<sup>1</sup> completed the covering and pacification of Palamau.

The strengthening of Neave's hand in Palamau in part had been achieved by a weakening of control over Tori. Before the arrival of Hawtrey's squadron Tori had been "in a state of complete disorganisation"<sup>2</sup> with villages burned, roads blocked, and all travellers without exception plundered. "All the well-affected inhabitants south of this [camp Bariatu] had fled, and their villages were destroyed".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Lambert to Govt., 6 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

2. Neave to Lambert, 23 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

3. Hawtrey to Jt.Commissioners, 23 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

Col. Hawtrey, on his arrival in the pargana on 25 February, had achieved one notable success by surprising the insurgents at Balunagar where, having plundered the villages of Charu and Bora the night before, they were celebrating with a feast of two fine bullocks. As a correspondent of the Bengal Hurkaru put it "The cavalry dropped in 'quite promiscuously' which so astonished 'my host' and his friends [...], that they completely lost all etiquette of politeness."<sup>1</sup> About 40 or 50 of the insurgents were cut up in the attack.<sup>2</sup> "The only casualties on our side in this affair," wrote Hawtrey, "were two horses wounded and it is with great regret I add, that one of our spies was killed, and another severely wounded, having been mistaken for enemies by our own men."<sup>3</sup> But the good effect of this vigorous action was largely undone by Hawtrey's return to Palamau, after the defeat of Marsh's detachment. Two companies of the 50th N.I. with one six-pounder, which had joined Hawtrey stayed on at Jalera after his withdrawal,<sup>4</sup> but their presence was not enough to overawe the insurgents after the cavalry had withdrawn. Consequently before Lt.Col. Hamilton, who arrived at Sherghati on 5 March with the remaining five companies of the 64th N.I. and two six-pounders from outside,<sup>5</sup> reached Tori early in March, the mischief in that pargana was over.

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1. 'A loyal Jageedar', 28 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 13 March 1832.

2. Hawtrey to Wilkinson, 25 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

3. Hawtrey to Jt. Commissioners, 26 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

4. Jt. Commissioners to Hawtrey, 3 March 1832, Ibid.

5. Lambert to Govt., 6 March 1832, Ibid.

Several hundred villages were laid waste and the major portion of the pargana fell a prey to the insurgents' wrath.<sup>1</sup>

With the main bodies of insurgents dispersed, troops arriving in considerable numbers, and the inhabitants of Palamau and Tori thereby reassured, the next task was to re-establish the civil administration and to enquire into the causes of the disturbance. It was not easy for the Calcutta authorities to decide how best this might be done. Neave had already impressed upon them, in a report of 14 February, that the Special Commissioners in Chota-Nagpur had not the means to deal with the situation in Palamau. They had, therefore, authorised Lambert, the Patna commissioner, "to exercise with regard to that tract and to confide to Mr. Neave at your discretion, the same powers that have been entrusted to these officers [Cuthbert and Wilkinson] in suspension of the ordinary Regulations."<sup>2</sup> To that course the joint commissioners had agreed, asking Lambert either himself to exercise or to depute some other person to exercise special civil powers in Palamau.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly Lambert asked the Government to appoint Robert Trotter as Register of the Ramgarh court with special powers, and to sanction his acting as Magistrate of Ramgarh if Neave had to go to

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1. R. Trotter to Lambert, 7 May 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

2. Govt. to Lambert, 20 (incorrectly written as 29) Feb. 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 12 of 21 Feb. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{4}$ )

3. Jt. Commissioners to Lambert, 29 Feb. 1832, B.C.1363/54228.



Palamau.<sup>1</sup>

It seemed likely at the end of February that Neave's presence would be required in Palamau, for despite the steady assembly of troops there, to restore the situation after Marsh's retreat, great alarm had been raised in Kunda, Nabinagar and Chechari of more insurgent attacks impending.<sup>2</sup> On 6 March the Bengal Government appointed Trotter as register with special powers,<sup>3</sup> while Lambert directed Neave that "in the event of the disturbances again breaking out in the pergunnah, you will proceed thither, and exercise there the same powers that have been entrusted to the special commissioners in suspension of the ordinary Regulations."<sup>4</sup> (He made it clear, of course, that according to the orders of the Government of 13 February the direction of the military force in the whole of the disturbed parts of Ramgarh would be retained by the joint commissioners.)

Neave, however, objected to the instruction that he should take charge of Palamau only if a fresh outbreak should occur, for he held that it was essential to hold a prompt enquiry and enforce immediate punishment upon those found guilty.<sup>5</sup> Lambert put his case to the joint commission-

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1. Lambert to Govt., 28 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225, Lambert to Govt., 29 Feb. 1832. Ibid. and Lambert to Govt., 5 March 1832, B.C.1363/54228.
  2. Lambert to Govt., 1 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225. Khirodar Sahi, jagirdar of Chechari, to Ramgarh Magt., N.D., Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 84 of 13 March 1832 (140/5)
  3. Govt. to Lambert, 6 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  4. Lambert to Neave, 5 March 1832, B.C.1363/54228.
  5. Neave to Lambert, 7 March 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

ers, asking that in the event of their being unable to conduct the necessary enquiries in Palamau, Neave might be authorized to make them.<sup>1</sup> The Patna commissioner was the readier to press this because the alternative seemed likely to be that he himself would have to conduct the enquiry, whereas his own plan was to return to Patna and go on a month's leave. (On 12 March the joint commissioners had written impressing upon him the particular desirability of the presence of a senior officer in Palamau to institute enquiries into the horrible drama lately there enacted.<sup>2</sup> On the very same day Lambert had written to Calcutta to explain that, with the return of peace to Palamau and the appointment of an officer in the Commissariat Department to take over the duty of furnishing supplies to the troops, "my residence at this station for the purpose of affording instructions and superintendence to the Acting Magistrate will probably be shortly no longer requisite."<sup>3</sup>) When, therefore, he received the Government's sanction for Trotter's acting magistracy, Lambert lost no time in asking Neave to proceed without delay to Palamau and there to conduct the necessary enquiries into the outbreak, reminding him that his special powers should only be exercised "in cases in which persons may be found in open resistance to

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1. Lambert to Jt.Commissioners, 8 March 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons. 93 of 13 March 1832 (140<sub>5</sub>)

2. Jt.Commissioners to Lambert, 12 March 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

3. Lambert to Govt., 12 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

the civil power, and in which the emergency may be such as to render necessary the employment of prompt and vigorous measures, but not in cases in which the offenders may without detriment to the public interests be left to be disposed of under the ordinary rules for the administration of justice."<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of March then Neave set off for Palamau and Lambert for Patna, the latter sending to Calcutta a long explanation of the good reasons for his returning there and the zeal which prompted him to do so.<sup>2</sup> (It did not save him from Government's reproof for not having delayed his departure from Sherghati till the troops' return indicated the restoration of complete tranquillity, and till he had obtained their permission).<sup>3</sup>

While these complicated manoevers were taking place among the civil officials, in preparation for an enquiry into the disturbances and restoration of the administration, there were further military alarms. Four companies of infantry with one field piece had been despatched from the right column operating from Tikoo, and two other companies came up from Patna to Sherghati to join Hawtrey's cavalry. The joint commissioners rightly held that this should be sufficient to deal with the insurrection in Palamau.<sup>4</sup> But alarming reports now came in from Raja Khirodar Sahi of

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1. Lambert to Neave, 15 March 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

2. Lambert to Govt., 2 Apl. 1832, Paras.2 to 9, B.C.1362/54225.

3. Govt. to Lambert, 17 Apl. 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

4. Jt.Commissioners to Hawtrey, commanding in Palamau, 27 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

Chechari, near Barwa pargana, stating that he was surrounded by insurgents and in imminent danger of attack.<sup>1</sup> The thanadar of Guran, in Palamau, also reported that three hundred Kharwars and Cheros, calling themselves Kols, had plundered the malik (proprietor) of Sipua [Supa?] near Udaipur.<sup>2</sup> Col. Hawtrey also reported several thousand insurgents assembled near Barwa.<sup>3</sup> These reports seem, if not false, to have been much exaggerated - Major Blackall wrote that he thought the raja had "not yet recovered from the panic with which he was seized on the insurrection first breaking out."<sup>4</sup> Certainly when Hawtrey set out on 17 March with infantry of the 64th to try and surprise the insurgents they failed to make contact and reported that no further operations at Barwa and Chechari were necessary.<sup>5</sup> By that date, too, Tori was quiet, and the communications between Tikoo and Sherghati via Tori had been completely restored.

When, therefore, Neave reached Latehar in Palamau at the end of March he was able to proceed with his investigation of the causes of the outbreak. He showed, however, very firm pre-conceived notions of what ought to be done with the insurgents. Thus on 29 March, almost as soon as he

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1. Hawtrey to Jt. Commissioners, 18 March 1832, and its enclosure, Ibid.
  2. Lambert to Govt., 12 March 1832, Ibid.
  3. Hawtrey to Jt. Commissioners, 9 [or 8] March 1832, Ibid.
  4. Major Blackall to Jt. Commissioners, 22 March 1832, Ibid.
  5. Lt. Col. Hawtrey to Jt. Commissioners, 18 March 1832, Ibid.

had arrived, he wrote to the Government to express his opinion that the tribal people of this area had become reckless because they had been treated with levity after their previous risings in 1801 and 1817. He thought that "until some of the insurgents especially those who have been actively engaged in bloodshed, suffer on the spot, no sufficiently effectual example for the purpose of prevention can be made."<sup>1</sup> He suggested, therefore, that Col. Hawtrey might be joined with him "in a commission to punish at discretion, save extending to life and death, all persons who may have been proved to have been concerned in the rising, and extending to life and death where the person may be proved to have been a leader or to have committed murder."<sup>2</sup>

Such attitudes did not meet with any support from the Bengal Government - their main concern was with the re-establishment of tranquillity. They, therefore, recommended lenience and the pardoning as far as possible of all offences committed in the heat of the insurrection. All plundered property had, of course, to be restored to its rightful owners, but the trial of the ringleaders and those accused of murder should take place according to the normal regulation procedure. "It is not deemed necessary", they told Neave, "to form any special Commission, or to confer

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1. Neave to Govt., 29 March 1832, Para.4, B.C.1363/54228.

2. Ibid. Para.5.

any extraordinary powers for this purpose.<sup>1</sup>

This check to any vengeful spirit in the civilian officials was paralleled, it may be noted, by one given to the military by the joint commissioners, a little earlier in the month. The occasion for their rebuke had been an attack upon a village near Bariatu in Tori by Lt.Burt, in which he had taken ten persons, seventy three bows, seven goats and a quantity of grain.<sup>2</sup> The commissioners, pointing out that now that the area was peaceful such actions were the responsibility of the police, ordered Burt to release the persons forthwith and to restore their cattle and grain.<sup>3</sup> Trotter later repeated their censure of Burt, pointing out that the action was quite contrary to established regulations.<sup>4</sup>

Early in April it became clear that Palamau and the surrounding areas had been pacified. Naturally therefore consultations began between the civil and the military authorities for the withdrawal of the majority of troops which had been employed there. Lt.Col. Hawtrey wrote to the joint commissioners on 6 April suggesting that two companies of Infantry would be sufficient to prevent the recurrence of any disturbances in Palamau.<sup>5</sup> As Neave also thought they would be sufficient the joint commissioners agreed to retain two companies of the 64th and directed Hawtrey to return his

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1. Govt. to Neave, 7 Apl. 1832, Para.6, B.C.1363/54228.

2. Lt.Burt to Jt.Commissioners, 22 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

3. Jt.Commissioners to Burt, 27 March 1832, Ibid.

4. Trotter to Burt, 9 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

5. Hawtrey to Jt.Commissioners, 6 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

forces to cantonment.

Neave's proposal that some troops should be stationed at Satbarwa and Latchar, though reluctantly agreed to by Wilkinson,<sup>1</sup> was turned down by the Government, and for the very reason which had made Wilkinson hesitate - a conviction that "regular troops ought not to be frittered away in the manner proposed by Mr. Neave."<sup>2</sup> A civil force, they thought, might be stationed at Leslieganj and other places in Palamau. (They had already informed Neave that he had to look to the joint commissioners for guidance.)<sup>3</sup>

From the middle of April Lt.Col. Hamilton, commanding the 64th Regt. N.I., began to press hard for the early withdrawal of the troops under him.<sup>4</sup> As Neave also thought that Palamau did not require troops any longer,<sup>5</sup> Wilkinson raised no objection to the move, particularly as sickness had broken out in the detachment.<sup>6</sup> But about Tori there was a difference of opinion. Though it was apparently tranquil, both Trotter and Lt.Col.Burt saw signs of intrigues by the landholders and some of the police officers.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, both Wilkinson and Neave saw no reason why Lt.Burt's

1. Jt.Commissioners to Hawtrey, 10 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

Also see Wilkinson to Neave, 20 Apl.1832, Ibid.

2. Govt. to Jt.Commissioners (Dent and Wilkinson), 1 May 1832, Ibid.

3. Govt. to Neave, 12 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

4. Lt.Col.Hamilton to Jt.Commissioners, 15 Apl.1832, Ibid.

5. Neave to Hamilton, 15 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

6. Wilkinson to Hamilton, 28 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

Also see Lt.Col. Hamilton to Neave, 28 Apl.1832,Ibid.

7. Trotter to Burt, 12 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

detachment should be continued there.<sup>1</sup> However, when early in May Captain Maltby moved with his detachment from Tori to Chatra on his way to Sherghati,<sup>2</sup> reports came through the joint commissioners about the assembling of armed bodies of men in Tori. Trotter also learnt about this development from a respectable person of the area named Radna Krishna Chaudhuri<sup>3</sup>. This was really an alarming report, and it was conveyed forth-with to the Patna Commissioner and through him to the Government. Maltby's further progress was halted at Chatra. Maltby's thorough enquiries showed, however, that the reports of unrest were a hoax, and had been occasioned by a private feud.<sup>4</sup>

The Government, therefore, on Lambert's recommendation, sanctioned the maintenance of an extra police force in Tori and asked the special commissioners to take charge of the pargana.<sup>5</sup> When that had been done Maltby set off again with his detachment from Chatra, thus completing the withdrawal of the military force from the area, to the great satisfaction of the Government.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Wilkinson to Trotter, 15 Apl. and 20 Apl. 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Neave to Hamilton, 15 Apl. 1832, Ibid.  
and Hamilton to Neave, 28 Apl. 1832, Ibid.
  2. Trotter to Lambert, 7 May 1832, Ibid.
  3. Trotter to Capt. Maltby, 6 May 1832, Ibid.
  4. Maltby to Trotter, 10 May 1832, Ibid.  
Trotter to Maltby, 11 May 1832, Ibid.  
Lambert to Govt., 13 May 1832, Ibid.
  5. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 15 May 1832, Ibid.
  6. Lambert to Govt., 17 May 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Govt. to Lambert, 22 May 1832, Ibid.



Chota-Nagpur:-

It is time now to turn again to the situation in Chota-Nagpur proper, where in January Wilkinson's force had checked but certainly not ended the disorders. As an account in the East India Magazine put it, Wilkinson's force was "too weak to enable him to act offensively, and he could only maintain his position at a place named Pathoraeh [Pitoria]".<sup>1</sup>

At the end of January the first reinforcements reached Chota-Nagpur - a company of the 2nd N.I., a hundred strong, under Capt. Maltby from Dinapur, together with a body of horsemen and barkandazes recruited by Neave, who went from Tori up the ghats to Tikoo, where they arrived on the 30th. From their arrival in the hills skirmishes began. On 1 February Maltby's camp was surrounded by some four thousand insurgents. They fled out of range when he moved out of camp, but the cavalry - an army with which they were unfamiliar- overtook and cut down 50 or 60 of them. After this the troops advanced unopposed to Churia. Their baggage hackeries (carts) were set upon, however, and it required another attack to get them through. Only on 4 February did the whole force join Wilkinson at Pitoria.<sup>2</sup>

Cuthbert had meanwhile joined Wilkinson and had been dismayed to find how circumscribed was the area under

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1. East India Magazine, July 1832.

2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.31, B.C.1502/58891.

the Company's control. Wilkinson's force held the town of Pitoria, and a few neighbouring villages. Lal Jit Nath Sahi of Gujnu, with some barkandazes from Pitoria, held his own villages in the pargana of Arnaidanda to the north-east and had beaten off several attacks - and further reinforced was to repel yet another on 8 February, - while his relation Kapil Nath of Salgi had also done well.<sup>1</sup> But all the rest of the countryside was in the hands of the insurgents.

The arrival of cavalry quickly produced a change in that situation. Regular infantry had proved ineffective - as Maltby wrote to Neave, "without some good cavalry, we can make but little of the Coles. They run faster than we can."<sup>2</sup> When the ground was suitable, however, cavalry were able to inflict heavy losses. On 2 February the cavalry caught a large body of Kols in the open at Tikoo and cut them up most effectively. Maltby reported, "a few of the suwars behaved also in the noblest manner, and it is them chiefly that the loss which the insurgents received is due."<sup>3</sup> Next day irregular cavalry with Wilkinson at Pitoria did similar execution. Wilkinson had heard of the insurgents' advance

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1. Ibid. Para.32: The Joint Commissioners spoke highly of the two zamindars: "They are the only Jageedars of all Nagpoor proper who made a manful stand against the Insurgents. The latter of the two after maintaining his ground for two or three days was at last overpowered by numbers and had three of his brothers and several of his followers killed only two days previous to Captain Matlby's arrival at Teekoo."
  2. Maltby to Neave, 2 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.
  3. Maltby to Captain Penny, Adj. General, 2 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

from Chutia, and had moved out against them. The Kols fled from his infantry but were pursued by the irregular horse commanded by Mitra Bhan Singh, and suffered at least a score killed.<sup>1</sup>

Wilkinson thereupon wrote to the Adjutant-General to point the moral - that without more cavalry or irregular horse it would be impossible "to make any very severe example" of the insurgents.<sup>2</sup> It must be confessed that the cavalry he had with him did not always come up to scratch. On 5 February Maltby wrote impatiently of the failure of the sawars to use their opportunities: "We could at different times have killed hundreds of them if our cavalry had dared to advance, but they are afraid to go near to Kholes, who [when] they are in bodies they drive readily enough at the stragglers, but never when there is any chance of opposition."<sup>3</sup> But Captain Impey at Tikoo was anxious for more cavalry, and the Bengal Government also struck the same note in their instructions to the joint commissioners: "It is the opinion of the Vice President in Council that Cavalry,

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1. Cuthbert to <sup>Govt.</sup> ~~Captain Penny~~, Adj. General, <sup>3</sup> 2 Feb. 1832, Ibid.  
 2. Wilkinson to Adj. General, 4 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

A letter from 'A Khol Killer' in the Bengal Hurkaru, 29 Feb. 1832, emphasised the value of cavalry: "The cavalry (we had with us a troop of the 3d Light cavalry) proved far more serviceable than Infantry, as the poor wretches trust more to their heels than to their bows and battle-axes; they indeed run with surprising swiftness; I have known a body of 1500 or 2000 men come down with a few hundred yards of the camp, flourishing their swords and battle-axes and cutting the most extraordinary capers; but on a small party of cavalry and a company of Infantry being sent to meet them, they made off at a rate which set all pursuit at defiance."

3. Maltby to Acting Magt., Ramgarh, 5 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.

if they can be fed, will be of the greatest use in subduing the insurrection."<sup>1</sup>

The possibility of securing more cavalry depended, however, not so much upon the willingness of the Adjutant-General to furnish them as upon the power of the Chota-Nagpur authorities to keep them supplied. The arrival of the 50th N.I. at Sherghati - less two companies directed by Neave to Chass<sup>2</sup> - had cleared the great Benares road and had so re-opened the communications with Calcutta - but this did little to improve the supply position. That had so far deteriorated, indeed, that on 4 February Neave had to request the commander of the 3rd Light Cavalry to halt at Sasaram, in Shahabad district. "Although I do not doubt that your presence here would materially tend to suppress the insurrection," Neave explained, "yet the extreme difficulty there is and will be of furnishing so large a body of cavalry with necessaries (for every article must be sent from here [Sherghati] in consequence of the rebels having completely ravaged the country) induce me to refrain from calling into this country more troops than are absolutely

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1. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 10 Feb. 1832, Para.2, B.C.1362/54224.
  2. The Bengal Government objected to this dispersion of forces: "A military force when ordered on a duty of this nature should not be weakened and rendered inefficient by being broken up into small and detached bodies." (Govt. to Lambert, 7 Feb. 1832, Para.3, Ibid. But they recognized Neave's zeal, and blamed Lambert, the Patna Commissioner, for not supervising that young and inexperienced officer. Lambert, they said, had not "taken the lead which was to have been expected from the high office" which he held. (Ibid. Para.5.)

necessary."<sup>1</sup> (To Lambert, the Patna Commissioner, he explained, "It is with the greatest difficulty I am enabled to supply the troops at present marching to Nagpore, the arrival of this corps would perhaps reduce me to greater straits."<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson, too, was experiencing great difficulty in obtaining supplies of any kind at Pitoria because all the supplies had fallen into the possession of or had been destroyed by the insurgents.<sup>3</sup> Neave had been spending heavily to secure supplies for Wilkinson - he reported to Lambert on 29 January the advancing of Rs.3,500 to the Chandhuries and other officials for this purpose. Subsequently, when defending the halting of the 3rd Cavalry at Sasaram, Neave wrote, "The providing of grain and other food for so large a body of men and horses formed another objection to the employing of this force, unless in a case of necessity, when it is considered that at present I have been obliged to entertain an establishment solely for the conveyance of grain and other supplies into Nagpore, costing several thousand rupees monthly, the increase necessary for the virtually three more squadrons of cavalry with their followers may be imagined."<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile the road between Chass and Hazaribagh was still infested by insurgents and there was great alarm,

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1. Neave to Col.Hawtrey, 4 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

2. Neave to Lambert, 4 Feb. Para.2. Ibid.

3. Neave to Govt., 28 Jan. 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons. 68 of 31 Jan. 1832 ( $\frac{140}{3}$ )

4. Neave to Lambert, 9 Feb. 1832, Para.5. B.C.1362/54224.

especially after the daroga of Chass had reported large numbers assembling on the Patkum frontiers.<sup>1</sup> In the Churia area, again, the Kols were very active. Their population in that area was very dense, so that large numbers could be assembled at a moment's notice, and they had in Buddhu Bhagat of Silligaon a leader with very great influence over them.<sup>2</sup> Moreover they knew intimately a countryside which was very well adapted to guerilla warfare, while the officers of the Company's forces, without adequate maps, and no previous knowledge of the passes and jungle, were often completely at a loss: "so little was known of its topography that when the troops marched out of the beaten path scarcely a soul knew where he was ..... In consequence of the want of this necessary knowledge, the troops ... were frequently marched and counter-marched very unnecessarily."<sup>3</sup> The result was that even when the Kols were engaged it was often impossible to close with them effectively.

Troops continued to arrive, however. From Benares the six companies of the 50th N.I. marched in under Captain Impey and a troop of the 3rd Light Cavalry reached Tikoo.<sup>4</sup> On 11 February two companies of the 54th N.I. and a brigade

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1. Capt. Angelo to Neave, 6 Feb. 1832, Ibid. Also see Martin, Asstt. Magt., Jungle Mahals, to Neave, 8 Feb. 1832, Ibid.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to officer commanding 50th N.I., 8 Feb. 1832, Para. 3, Ibid.: It was confidently expected that his death or seizure would soon lead to the pacification of the area.
  3. Spry, Modern India, 1837, I, 117.
  4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 34, B.C.1502/58891.

of guns arrived and Col. Bowen of the 34th N.I. was directed on 9 February to turn aside from his march from Barrackpur to Bankura into Tamar, Bundu and the other dependent parganas of Chota-Nagpur bordering on the Jungle Mahals.

With these re-inforcements it was possible to restore order in the northern and central parganas.<sup>1</sup> After Captain Impey had inflicted heavy losses on the insurgents near Tikoo, a body of some 4,000 of them threw down their arms and surrendered to him on 10 February. (They had been promised mercy if they did so.)<sup>2</sup> The prisoners taken on the 10th were nearly all lost on the march to Churia during a hail-storm so violent as to throw the 3rd Cavalry into complete confusion,<sup>3</sup> but on the 13th that loss was more than made good by a successful attack on Buddhu Bhagat at Silligaon. Impey surrounded the village with four companies of infantry and his troop of cavalry, and then attacked the village. The insurgents made a stubborn resistance. "We here found", wrote a <sup>n</sup>Newspaper correspondent, "a set of men very different from our Tikoo friends."<sup>4</sup> In the face of bullets they stood firm like a rock. As Major Sutherland noted, "The Buggut's [Bhagat's] family and followers stood up like men round their aged chief; but what chance has the bow and arrow

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1. But, as Metcalfe admitted in his private letter to Bentinck, 19 Feb. 1832, "no impression has yet been made on the insurrection in Chota-Nagpoor:" Bentinck MS., Box 17. He further referred to "the helplessness and dismay in all places without troops:" Ibid.
  2. An officer, Bengal Hurkaru, 25 Feb. 1832. Also see Capt. Impey to Neave, 11 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.
  3. Capt. Impey to Jt. Commissioners, 12 Feb. 1832, Ibid.
  4. "A 'Khol-Killer', Bengal Hurkaru, 29 Feb. 1832.

against a round of musketry or the Cole battle-axe against the pistol and sabres of our troopers!"<sup>1</sup> The old leader thus perished with his brother, sons and a hundred followers.<sup>2</sup> As two other attacks were made the same day by Captain Maltby's forces on the villages of Deori Nagri<sup>3</sup> and Gari, 17 miles south-west and 12 miles south-east of Pitoria, in which despite a stubborn resistance<sup>4</sup> by the Kols, considerable losses were inflicted upon them, the insurgents' spirit was for the moment broken. "The good effects arising from Buddoo Buggut's death are already visible, as the chiefs of many Khole [Kol] villages have come in and tendered their

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1. Major Sutherland to Govt., N.D., B.C.1363/54227.
  2. Some accounts put it at 200 and 350: Impey to Jt. Commissioners, 18 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224; A 'Khol-Killer', Bengal Hurkaru, 29 Feb. 1832. The death of Buddhu Bhagat was described by a correspondent in Pitoria camp in his letters to the Bengal Hurkaru, 21 Feb. 1832. He wrote with rather unpleasant satisfaction of the "jolly good drubbing" given to the Kols, though a close inspection of the results seems to have been less agreeable: "I have to [at] this instant seen the heads of Boodo Bhugghut and his brother and his nephew which have been brought to the Commissioners; how horrid it is to see such sights." Ibid.
  3. Dalton in 1872 described Nagri as "a very primitive Oraon village" where "songs are sung that remind the young men how their fathers 'went out' in 1832": Ethnology, 172. According to A Subaltern (East Indian Journal, No. 3, old series, 189) Deori and Nagri were two villages about twenty miles from Pitoria.)
  4. Maltby reported of the engagement at Gari that there was hand to hand fighting and the Kols with their battle-axes fought desperately:  
Captain Maltby to Capt Pasmore, Adj. General, 16 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.



submission to the Commissioners."<sup>1</sup> According to an eye-witness account, the people for 20 miles round Churia submitted.<sup>2</sup> They tendered their submissions through their pahans and mahtos in great numbers. The only British failure at this period was at Basia. Sahib Singh, a subadar of the Ramgarh battalion with a party of 42 sepoys, who had reached Basia on 9 February, remained an inactive spectator of the Kol atrocities in that area, and the only action in which he engaged was a skirmish at Palkote, the residence of the maharaja on the 12th in which some 4 or 5 Kols were killed.<sup>3</sup>

The British success in the north of Chota-Nagpur, however, did not lead to a surrender by the tribal people of the western and southern parganas - indeed they showed, said Major Sutherland, a "power of endurance beyond that which exists in most other countries."<sup>4</sup> Resistance continued, particularly in Tamar, Sonepur and Barwa, where the inhabitants had carried their corn and cattle into the hills, and where the proximity of Singhbhum gave promise of Larka help, or of safe refuge in case of a crisis. Against such people isolated successes were not enough. The Dhangar Kols, with their extraordinary power of concerted action when summoned

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1. 'A Khol-killer', Bengal Hurkaru, 29 Feb. 1832.
  2. Spry, op.cit. 122. The troops got Rs.1,000 as reward for the Bhagat's head which was divided among the non-commissioned officers and privates. Ibid. 121.
  3. Translated letter, Sahib Singh, 12 Feb. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.
  4. Sutherland to Govt., N.D., Ibid.

by their manki, munda or bhagat, were formidable fighters. Moreover, as they became familiar with the destructive capacity of firearms and more wary of cavalry attack, it became more difficult to inflict any considerable defeat. Their scouts and spies quickly passed news of the plans of the authorities from circle to circle so that surprise was difficult.

To deal with such enemies required patience and endurance, and closely coordinated action. That coordination was for a while made impossible by the outbreak in Palamau, already described, and the consequent division of Hawtrey's forces into Palamau and Tori. By 17 February, however, the joint commissioners had laid their plans for a concerted sweep into the dangerous southern parganas. They divided the troops into three columns, the right column being posted at Tikoo, the centre at Churia, a village to the eastward of Tikoo and between that place and Pitoria, and the left at Pitoria.<sup>1</sup> The right was to move to Palkote, the centre to Basia, to the east of Palkote, and the left into the Sonapur tract of villages. The officer commanding the right column was asked to open communications with the troops in Palamau and the left, with which the commissioners themselves proceeded, was to operate to the eastward as far as the boundaries of Tamar and Bundu into which Col. Bowen's force had

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Maltby, 17 Feb. 1832, Para. 2, B.C.1362/54224. Also see the enclosed map 'Sketch of Chuta Nagpore and its dependencies.'

been directed.<sup>1</sup> The object underlying this plan was either to punish or to conciliate the insurgents as might be necessary. In case of resistance the example of Silligaon might be repeated.

On 17 February, Captain Johnson of the 50th N.I., who had been detached to Chass to keep open the great Benares military road, reached Pitoria with two companies of his corps and on the day following marched to Churia with his detachment and the brigade of guns which had arrived on the 11th. Then in conformity to the general plan of operations mentioned above, Captain Johnson with a wing of the 50th, one six-pounder, some barkandazes and the horses of Mitrajit Singh's contingent, proceeded to Tikoo on 19 February. The Midnapur detachment under Captain Horsbrough<sup>u</sup> was placed under the general command of Col. Bowen, so as to concert their action in Tamar.<sup>2</sup>

While these movements of troops were taking place ready for intensive operations in the last week of February, important consultations were being held between the Bengal Government and the joint commissioners about the treatment of offenders. In case of continued resistance, the Government thought, bloodshed was unavoidable. But those who submitted without resistance, although guilty in the past,

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Capt. Maltby, 17 Feb. 1832, Para. 5, B.C. 1362/54224.

2. Govt. to Asstt. Quarter Master General of the army, 17 Feb. 1832, Beng. Cr. Jt. Cons. 1 of 21 Feb. 1832 (140/4)

were either to be reserved for trial or dismissed with or without security for their future good behaviour. The Government totally prohibited the practice of offering rewards for delivering the insurgent leaders dead or alive, as had been done in the case of Buddhu Bhagat.<sup>1</sup> (They thought that the tone of some of the passages in the letters of instructions of the commissioners to Captain Impey and Col. Bowen was of an objectionable harshness and severity.)<sup>2</sup> They also issued instructions to the Commissioners to guide them in exercising the powers of summary trial and punishment with which they had been invested. On 23 February they wrote to them to ask whether they had issued proclamations which would encourage the people to return to their allegiance, and thereby save any further and unnecessary effusion of blood.<sup>3</sup> Later on they authorized them to offer a full pardon to all concerned in the unrest excepting those who had been the principal instigators or the main perpetrators of crimes. Last, but not least, they ordered the commissioners to assure the peaceful inhabitants that they were prepared to investigate any well-founded complaints.

Already on 20 February, however, the joint commissioners had issued the following proclamation from Tikoo: "To all the Moondas, Pahris [sic] &ca in the neighbourhood of

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1. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 23 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.
  2. Beng. Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, Para.22, B.C.1362/54223.
  3. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 23 Feb. 1832, Para.8, B.C.1362/54224.

Teekoo and Lohardugga. Know you, all those who wish to submit to the Sirkar come to the officer in command of Teekoo, and write down your names, or if you come within one or two days, come to the Huzoor and write your names. Those who do not come in will take the consequences on themselves; those who consult their good-will come in & restore the property<sup>1</sup> to those from whom they have taken it; come in without fear." Another such proclamation was issued from Churia on the same day: "To all Coles who are assembled and [were] assembled near the Hurryharpore Ghaat, know you. If your intention be to submit, and be obedient, come to the presence immediately on the receipt of this perwanah. If you do not intend to submit, but continue in rebellion, you will certainly be punished and killed. If you consult your good by all means, come to the Huzoor quickly. Lall Gokul Sahy has spoken in your behalf. Therefore come quickly to the Huzoor."<sup>2</sup>

These proclamations did not result in any immediate flow of surrenders, so several small attacks were made by the assembled troops. Impey forced his way into the small but difficult range of hills near Gajnu (14 miles south-west of Churia) where the Kols under the influence of their leader Suru Bhagat had refused to submit. In a night attack some fifteen of them were killed and others captured.<sup>3</sup> The

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1. Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 26 May 1832, B.C.1363/54229.

2. Ibid.

3. Capt. Impey to Capt. Penny, Deputy Adjutant General, 24 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.

unexpected blow was followed by the surrender of Suru Bhagat and of the pahans and mahtos of all the insurgent villages of this area on 26 February at Tikoo. Some 151 village heads came after this, and made their submission.

Col. Bowen, at Pitoria, set out in similar fashion for Sonahatu on 22 February. He caught up with a number of the insurgents there, inflicted considerable losses, and thereafter was able to reinstate the Raja of Rahi pargana, who established a police thana, and to restore to the mahajans and other dispossessed persons their property and possessions.<sup>1</sup>

This success was followed up by an advance into Bundu pargana. Two parties, directed by the Raja of Bundu surprised the insurgents at Kumta Induhotri and Kachri, inflicting a few casualties, and a major success was scored at Buruhatu, 4 miles or so from Bundu. There the guns were used for the first time, and some 60 insurgents were killed, and much surprise and terror caused.<sup>2</sup>

In central Chota-Nagpur there were other successful attacks, which led to the submission of over a hundred Kol villages through their mundas, pahans, etc. At the same time the joint commissioners received the sworn allegiance

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1. Col. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 26 Feb. 1832, Paras. 1 and 2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 47 of 6 March 1832 (140/4)  
Also see Report from Camp Bundu, 26 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 3 March 1832.

2. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 26 Feb. 1832, Para. 5 Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 47 of 6 March 1832. (140/4)  
Also see Col. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 27 Feb. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

of 300 influential Kols at their camp at Pitoria.<sup>1</sup>

The joint commissioners also adopted various constructive measures at this time. They did not merely threaten, they proclaimed to the mankis, mundas, etc, whom they urged to come in, that "it is the object of the Sirkar to benefit its subjects." This they demonstrated by hearing the legitimate complaints of the Kols against their zamindars, and ordering the officers commanding the detachments at Tikoo and Churia to collect information about any oppression by the zamindars and renters, so that offenders might be brought to book.<sup>2</sup> As a result of such action, and of the direct appeals to the insurgents which, since the audience was illiterate, were intimated "through their brethren who have already come in, and through their zamindars,"<sup>3</sup> large numbers did come in. By early March a correspondent could report, "one of the chief proofs that the insurgents are coming to their senses is that both they and the zemindars are daily bringing complaints against each other before the commissioners."<sup>4</sup>

It was from pacified north, east and central Chota-Nagpur that on 5 March the three columns set out for the still rebellious south-west. From their bases at Bundu,

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1. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 27 Feb. 1832, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons. 45 of 6 March 1832 (140<sub>4</sub>)

2. Jt.Commissioners to officers commanding at Tikoo and Churia, 2 March 1832, B.C.1362/54224.

3. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 3 March 1832, Ibid.

4. 'P', Camp Pitoria, 5 March 1832, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 13 March 1832.

Churia and Tikoo the troops undertook frequent dours or drives against the insurgent strongholds. Herds of cattle, bags of grain, salt etc. were seized and carried off. All too often little discrimination was exercised and the villages of peaceable Muslims and mahajans were burnt (perhaps to vent the personal spite of those who acted as guides) and their property seized.<sup>1</sup> The troops might perhaps be excused - the work was quite unfamiliar, very arduous, often fruitless - as on the occasion reported in the John Bull when the troops abandoned their pantaloons the better to pursue the Kols, marched ten kos at night through paddy fields and along miserable paths, climbed a thousand foot hill of enormous dark granite rocks, piled one <sup>upon</sup> another - and then found the whole expedition "a most abominable hoax practised upon the Commissioner. by one of his own spies."<sup>2</sup> But when their irritation was vented upon an innocent village the joint commissioners were hard put to it to make amends, and there was some adverse criticism in the press. A letter from Churia camp to the John Bull declared, "Men stare at each other, and ask how long this state of affairs is to continue; and what is the cause of this assemblage of troops to fight an enemy who is not in existence ..... What has been going on against the Coles will bear a strict parallel with some of the persecutions against the Waldenses,

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1. Letter from Churia camp, 24 Feb. 1832, John Bull,  
quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 2 March 1832.

2. Ibid.



or the sufferings of the Huguenots in France, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantz<sup>t</sup>, by Louis XIV."<sup>1</sup> The writer went on to agree, however, that since many of the Kols had been misled by their leaders the whole retribution exacted was unjust and oppressive, and he painted an "unhappy picture" of the joint commissioners, exasperated by the insolence of rebel chiefs bent upon "making an example" and of "women and children in the midst of dead bodies holding out their infants and screaming" after the attack on Silligaon.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of February the operations in central and northern Chota-Nagpur were at an end. Those in the eastern parganas such as Tamar and Bundu were still, however, in full swing. There were stockades being built at Gur<sup>u</sup>ghatu and Kotonagar in Tamar and several thousand Kols in arms under eight leaders.<sup>3</sup> In March there were reports from Kera, in Singhbhum, of five more villages in revolt, and ready to join the Tamar insurgents.<sup>4</sup> Against these Col. Bowen's force advanced, in a series of raids and skirmishes, such as that against the hill stronghold of Kota on the ridge above Surgia, where a large granary was found and destroyed: "everyman of the detachment took what he wanted of the grain

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Jt. Commissioners to Bowen, 28 Feb. 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 49 of 6 March 1832 ( $\frac{140}{4}$ )

4. Wilkinson to Bowen, 2 March 1832, B.C.1503/58896.

etc. and the remainder and the village were afterwards destroyed."<sup>1</sup> The 34th next entered Tamar, a considerable town but almost completely destroyed by the insurgents, and thence pushed on to Bugai, driving the Kols before them. (A report in the Bengal Hurkaru noted, "Had the Khols stood, we must have sustained a heavy loss, as we were absolutely pinned in a defile full two miles in length and between two ranges of high hills covered with a heavy jungle.")<sup>2</sup>

Where they did stand, as at Arki on 8 March, where they had a strong position approached by defiles which had been blocked by felled trees, ditches and bamboo stockades, the British forces were in fact beaten off,<sup>3</sup> though not before they had inflicted considerable losses. Col. Bowen was so impressed, indeed, by the strength of the position that he declined to attack a second time without re-inforcements.<sup>4</sup> However, the enemy had been even more impressed by the 34th N.I. and on 10 March Arki was found abandoned. "A quantity of grain was brought into camp from their granary, and what could not be carried off, was destroyed in addition to all the huts, etc. on the brink of the hills in the neighbourhood, that had not previously been burnt down."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Report from Tamar, 4 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 19 March 1832. Also see Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 3 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  2. Report from Tamar, 6 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 19 March 1832. Also see Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 9 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  3. Ibid. One sepoy was killed and Ensign McLeod fatally wounded.
  4. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 9 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  5. Report from Tamar, 11 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 23 March 1832.

Meanwhile, some of the insurgent leaders were submitting in this area. On 6 March eight mundas came to the camp and gave written muchalkas (securities) for their future good behaviour, and for the restoration to the rightful owners of all the plundered property.<sup>1</sup> According to a newspaper report, many more were hourly expected and there was "some prospect of a termination of this warm campaign" in this area.<sup>2</sup> Bowen's report of 11 March confirmed the report of a strengthening disposition to submit - a disposition which he had encouraged through letters sent to the chiefs, and by the circulation of the joint commissioners' proclamation. He wrote to the joint commissioners "I trust that these measures of conciliation (now that punishment has been so repeatedly inflicted) will be crowned with success, and that the insurrection in these pergunnahs will be [die]"<sup>3</sup> In the same letter he forwarded a list of thirteen

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1. Bowen to Jt.Commissioners, 9 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225:  
From Tamar: Bahadur Singh Munda of Sundari, Dhun Singh Munda of Kaparia (Kasaria?), Lal Singh Munda of Mankidi, Boran Singh Munda of Prassi, Kandi Singh of Kandihi and Mochi Rai of Kundula;  
From Banta Hajam: Mohan Singh Munda of Putrahatu.
  2. Report from Tamar, 6 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 19 March 1832.
  3. Bowen to Jt.Commissioners, N.D., Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 55 of 20 March 1832 ( $\frac{140}{5}$ ) .

insurgent chiefs who had submitted with the usual securities.<sup>1</sup>

It was high time for peace to be restored, for thanks to the operations of both the Kols and the Company's forces, the country had become one scene of desolation. There was no prospect of any harvest and famine was impending. The situation was such that Col. Bowen felt compelled to take action to restore stolen working cattle to the owners so that the work of cultivation could continue. About 4,000 head of cattle had been seized by the Kols in Tamar alone, and these the diwans of Tamar, Bundu and other parganas were now reclaiming (the captains of the various military detachments naturally claimed them as booty), but, as Col. Bowen wrote, it was impossible to see "how this country is again to be cultivated if the bullocks plundered by the Coles are not restored to the owners, when they fall into our hands."<sup>2</sup> He, therefore, issued the following order:<sup>3</sup>

"The Commanding officer desires that all cattle (including bullocks, cows, horses or tattoos) which have been taken in the insurgent villages of Solakotee, Sergee and Kotah shall be delivered over to the custody of the local constituted

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1. Ibid. They were from Bundu pargana: Baya Ram Munda of Buchuhatu, Hindu Munda of Humpta, Gundul Munda of Amadi, Borhan Singh Munda of Sungu [Tungu], Munda Gokul Munda of Baradi, Jit Rai Munda of Hadimat Kema, Mochi Rai Munda of Kadi, Narain Munda of Karama, Sahari Munda of Kulma, Kadi Rai Munda of Chitudes, Gunsa Munda of Kailadi and Kaisa Munda of Teli Murcha.
  2. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 11 March 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 57 of 20 March 1832 (140)<sub>5</sub>.
  3. Extract, Detachment order, Ibid.

authorities of the pergunnah (the Dewans) in which such villages are situated,,in order to their being identified and claimed by the Mahajans, and other respectable inhabitants from whom they are generally known to have been plundered. Receipt will be taken by the commanding officer for the number given over .....This order [is] to be considered applicable to such of the insurgent villages as may hereafter be visited or attacked by any portion of this force."

With Tikoo, Churia, Palamau and Tamar pacified, the joint commissioners ordered a further general move to the south.<sup>1</sup> The troops of the rajas and zamindars were appointed to hold the area already subdued and to keep open communications with the troops operating below the ghats. Supplies were arranged for a campaign of a month and a half, with a few days' supply of rice always in camp. An assistant commissary-general was appointed to regulate the distribution of the supplies forwarded by Neave, and to report to him the details of sales proceeds etc.<sup>2</sup> Still other supplies were arranged from Calcutta via Jhalda. The columns then set out for Lohardugga, Tikudiga<sup>3</sup> and Barkagarh.

The joint commissicners were anxious for an opportunity to strike some telling blow - there was to be no .

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1. Jt.Commissioners to Major Blackall, 4 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

2. Jt.Commissioners to Asstt. Commissary General, 4 and 5 March 1832, Ibid.

3. Capt. Johnson to Lt. Saunders, Detachment staff, 14 March 1832, Ibid.

manoeuvring, no diplomacy. But there was, in fact, little chance of any major engagement - the Kols occasionally displayed individual bravery, more often they took to their heels, vanished into the jungles and fitfully harassed the sepoys.

In any case the right and centre columns<sup>1</sup> met with no opposition. Mahtos and pahans regularly came in and tendered their submission. At Maharajganj and Armai submissions began almost as soon as the troops arrived, and every encouragement was given by proclamation to the tribal people calling for no more violence and a return to their peaceful occupations. Near Barkagarh the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur and his uncle, the Kunwar of Basia, joined the joint commissioners with a small number of their retainers.<sup>2</sup> They reported some Kols still defiant at Nawagarh and Barwa, but on Major Blackall's approach with the right column the mahtos and pahans came in as readily as they already had done round Armai and in Mokha (Mokhatu) pargana. His march to Palkote, which he reached on 20 March, was thus uneventful.

For some days the advance of the left column, which the joint commissioners accompanied, was just as quiet, with the villages along the route all tendering their submission. But on reaching Sonapur, where the insurrection had origin<sup>ally</sup>

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1. Major Blackall to Jt. Commissioners, 13 March 1832, Ibid.

2. 'P', 10 March 1832, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru 17 March 1832.

Also see Jt. Commissioners to Blackall, 12 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

broken out, signs of resistance were discovered, The Kols had deserted all the villages south and east of Khunti and had carried off their grain and cattle into the hills and jungles where they were reported in force. (The only submissive villages were those of the Rautias.) Only two of the mankis came in.

There now began a war of attrition in a country of great difficulty and strength. On 20 March Captain Maltby attacked the village of Ranidih, destroying grain stores, carrying off a hundred head of cattle.<sup>1</sup> Then Johnson of the centre column closed in driving off yet another large body of insurgents, while Ewart, with the 54th, killed others, and destroyed many grain stores.<sup>2</sup> Col. Bowen was ordered to advance from Tamar to Saradkel (or Saradkeli),<sup>3</sup> and the zamindars of Saraikela, Kera and Karaikela (all in Singhbhum) were ordered to cooperate from the south.<sup>4</sup> On 22 March Maltby with three companies of the 50th, two of the 54th, a hundred men of the Ramgarh battalion, a company of the 2nd N.I., a troop and a half of the 3rd cavalry, one six-pounder and the barkandazes and retainers of the maharaja burned more villages, destroyed further grain-stores and

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Maltby, 20 March 1832, Ibid.; Capt. Maltby to Capt. Pasmore, 21 March 1832, Ibid.  
Also see an eye-witness account in Spry, Modern India, I, 122.
  2. Maltby to Pasmore, 21 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.  
Report from Camp Demajurda, 25 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru 7 April 1832.
  3. Jt. Commissioners to Bowen, 23 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  4. Jt. Commissioners to the chiefs of Singhbhum, Enclosure,  
Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 23 March 1832, Ibid.

captured some hundreds of cattle.<sup>1</sup> The objective had indeed become not the elusive Kol forces, but their supplies and their families. Captain Maltby put this quite plainly: "I hope to succeed in attacking them, and destroying the remainder of the grain, and I shall, if possible, capture their wives and families as being one of the surest means of bringing them a sense of their duty to Government."<sup>2</sup>

The process of starving the rebels into submission, and of harassing them continually was made more tedious and difficult by the onset of bad weather, and by the intrigues of the supposedly loyal zamindars, or their periodic bursts of panic. Col. Bowen's march from Tamar was delayed by pressing appeals from the Rajas of Silli and Banta Hajam and by the panic which his departure induced in the Rani of Tamar, The Raja of Silli even went so far as to seek to convince Col. Bowen that "without the total extermination of the Coles in this quarter there will be no security for the lives and property of the well affected."<sup>3</sup> Yet the newspaper correspondents in Tamar were very doubtful about the loyalty of "the well-affected" and denied that there ever had been serious danger in Silli and Banta Hajam: "private squabbles, in which we have no right to interfere, there have undoubtedly been, but there has been no insurrection,"<sup>4</sup>

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1. Maltby to Pasmore, 22 March 1832, Ibid., 13 sepoy and several horses were killed at Ramidih. Also see Report from Sujna Madi camp, 23 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 31 March 1832.

2. Maltby to Pasmore, 21 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.

3. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 15 March 1832, Ibid.

4. Report from Camp Banta Hajam, 16 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 23 March 1832, Also see Report from Silli, 17 March 1832, Ibid.



or even more forthright, "our good friend the Sillie Raja still keeps up the joke of pretending that a body of insurgents is in our neighbourhood, but whether he will give it up as a bad job on finding that he cannot employ the force to be sent ... on some wild goose chase merely to save appearances has not as yet been determined."<sup>1</sup> When the rebel Mohan Munda (of Putahatu in Banta Hajam) was taken he boldly asserted that the Silli raja was accusing him because of a quarrel for the possession of some property<sup>2</sup> - and a correspondent of the Bengal Hurkaru evidently believed that the Silli raja's story of the munda's rebellious activity was all humbug, designed to secure the destruction of Mohan's village by the British troops.<sup>3</sup> In another instance the zamindar of Kharsawan Thakur Chetan Singh was suspected rather of sheltering the rebel manki of Gamharia, of concealing the granaries of the insurgents for a bribe, and of "filling his pocket at the expense of both parties."<sup>4</sup>

Such suspicion of their allies and of those whose interests they were supposed to be protecting did not sweeten the temper of the officers and their troops. Nor did the appalling weather, the drenching rain which made the jungle warfare doubly depressing at times even halting all operations, and the swollen rivers which made ~~it~~ still more

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1. Report from Silli, 17 March 1832, Ibid.
  2. ~~Ibid.~~ Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 16 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  3. Report from Banta Hajam, 16 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 23 March 1832.
  4. Report from Arki, 28 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 7 Apr. 1832.

difficult to get up supplies. "The weather here is dreadful," wrote one correspondent, "incessant storms of wind, hail and rain. The cold is at times intense, and the thunder and lighting far exceeded anything I have hitherto experienced in India. In fact this is positively 'the land of storms'."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, though the Kols rarely stood their ground before an attack of the British forces,<sup>2</sup> and though they were being steadily driven back, they were capable at all times of inflicting losses. The country was unfavourable for cavalry action, and when it pressed too close into the hills - as on 22 March when Maltby launched his biggest attack - it suffered unpleasant losses: "Information having been brought that the grass-cutters had been attacked, they [the cavalry] charged forward to protect them and some found themselves in the midst of an almost invisible enemy, who were hidden in the surrounding jungle, but who made themselves felt by pouring in showers of arrows upon our unfortunate men who were perfectly helpless. Their horses could not charge into the wood and up the hills and they could see no one to fire their pistols at .... They [the Kols] are extremely watchful, and woe to the man who strays from his companions; they instantly make a dart on him and

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1. Report from 'P' Camp Tujna (Sajna) Nadi, 26 March 1832, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 3 Apl. 1832.
  2. "The insurgents never opposed the infantry en masse, but contented themselves with cutting off every one who straggled from the column of attack": Ibid.

annihilate him, and we are often extremely delayed and inconvenienced by waiting to protect that infernal crowd of camp followers."<sup>1</sup> Those who were cut off were invariably done to death, the bodies being completely stripped, horribly mutilated and "dreadfully hacked".<sup>2</sup> The British forces were obviously handicapped by their ignorance of the jungle, which the Kols used so well, and their military training was often of little use in the unfamiliar conditions: "From their knowledge of the localities of the hills and superior personal activity, together with the circumstances of the black and crouching Coles being with difficulty seen in the dark jungle, whilst our red coats and erect attitude render us always a conspicuous mark, I conceive they are more than a match for our muskets in jungle fighting. Many an arrow glanced by our men, without our being able to espy the hands that directed it."<sup>3</sup>

Both sides had by this time good cause to wish the struggle ended. When therefore the joint commissioners were told by the vakil of the Chota-Nagpur raja that if they wrote to the mankis, mundas and other Kols of Sonepur still in arms, they would submit forthwith,<sup>4</sup> they readily agreed

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1. Letter from Camp Sajna Nadi, 23 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 31 March 1832.

2. Report from Kundipatti, 30 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 9 Apl. 1832.

3. Report from the banks of the Sajna Nullah (Nadee), 21 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 29 March 1832.

4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 7 Apl. 1832, Para.2, B.C.1362/54225.

to suspend Maltby's operations, and offer an amnesty. On 29 March they accordingly issued a proclamation<sup>1</sup>. This implied - though it did not say so in so many words - that the headmen as well as their followers would be pardoned. It had been realised that tribal loyalties were such that peace could only be secured by the promise of pardon for manki, munda, and villager alike.

For a day or two there was no response and Col. Bowen's column advancing from Tamar ran into heavily stockaded jungle near the Arkighat in which he lost three Europeans of the Horse Artillery, who, straying from the column, were cut off and terribly hacked.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, when he still sent out a proclamation of free pardon, he received back the uncompromising reply that "they preferred being killed in fighting against their oppressors to being hanged by the judge."<sup>3</sup> (This defiance was replied to by the burning down of the villages from which those who killed the Europeans had sallied forth, as an act of deliberate vengeance.<sup>4</sup>

But though the country was formidable and easy to defend, the Kols could not hope to resist for long. "They

1. Parwana, 29 March 1832, Ibid.
2. Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 30 March 1832, Para. 2, Ibid. Also see Report from Camp Kundi, 29 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832, and Letter from Kundipatti, 30 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 9 Apl. 1832.
3. Report from Camp Kundi, 29 March Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832.
4. Report from Kandu Patti, 30 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832.

must", wrote a correspondent, "ere long, give way before us, for we are about to be joined by Colonel Bowen, from Tamar, on the East, and the Singboom chiefs are coming from the south, so that they will be completely hemmed in, and if they do not give up speedily, will inevitably be starved, if a more speedy death does not overtake them, from the hands of our soldiers; for in the first place, we have destroyed large quantities of the grain they had laid up in store, and continue to do so, wherever we can find it - and in the second place, they will be unable to sow their seed for the next year's crop, the time for which process is fast approaching: as we are in full possession of the plains, which were already ploughed for the purpose, before we entered them."<sup>1</sup> On 3 April, few days after Col. Bowen's arrival at Saradkel, the surrenders began in response to yet another proclamation - Singrai Manki, Mohan Manki, Sagar Manki and a few others submitting to the joint commissioners. Next day they brought the whole population of Kandupatti to yield. Contrary to expectations, some of the ringleaders of Tamar also submitted. Only one ringleader of this area now remained at large.<sup>2</sup>

There was still evidently some apprehension among the Kols - that they would be put in irons, be held

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1. Report from Sajna Nadee, 30 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 9 Apl. 1832.
  2. Report from Camp Sarad Kel, 4 Apl. 1832, John Bull, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832.

responsible for all property destroyed or looted and so on - but it was becoming more and more apparent that they could not resist much longer. Wilkinson, therefore, redoubled his "soothing system"<sup>1</sup>. He sent messengers to Bindrai Manki and Sui Munda of Bandgaon in Singhbhum, the most noted leaders of the area. A few leaders of Tamar and Sonapet were in the same way tackled by Cuthbert and Col. Bowen.<sup>2</sup> On 8 April Bahadur Singh and others, who had been sent by Wilkinson to contact the Kols of Singhbhum brought the news that their submission was rather doubtful, though they had asked for ten days' time.<sup>3</sup> So Col. Bowen's march to Tamar was deferred and the whole force marched to Bamhani in the neighbourhood of Bangaon.<sup>4</sup> Major Blackall was also approaching the area with the right hand column, having already received the submission of all the insurgent leaders of Barwa and restored the Barwa raja to his estate.<sup>5</sup> On his approaching Bamhani, on 13 April the Bandgaon insurgents were deserted by Dasai Munda, and Rati [Katik?] Sardar of Kochang.<sup>6</sup> On 19 April Bindrai and Sui surrendered, and on the 25th Dasai Manki of Kochang, accompanied by Khandu Pater

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1. Report from a fine open plain, Injra Nadee, 1 April 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 7 Apl. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1362/54225.
  3. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 8 Apl. 1832, Ibid.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Letter from Barwanagar, 2 Apl. 1832, India Gazette, 19 Apl. 1832. Also see Letter from Camp Armai, 9 Apl. 1832, India Gazette, 19 Apl. 1832.
  6. Jt. Commissioners to Bowen. 13 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1362/54225.

of Karaikela and the Mukhtar of the zamindar of Kera, also submitted.<sup>1</sup> When they had come in all the rebel chiefs had been accounted for.

It was now possible to disband the punitive columns and they began the return to cantonments. There was great rejoicing by officers and men, all of whom were fed up with the campaigns, even to the point of believing that Wilkinson was prolonging the affair for the sake of his special salary of Rs.3,000.<sup>2</sup>

The first to leave were the Barrackpur detachment under Col. Bowen who set out on 15 Apl. for Tamar accompanied by the senior commissioner, Cuthbert. "Thank God", wrote one of the men, "we have at last turned our backs upon the Ramghurees and Bhuddoo Buggut's pickled head ... I am precisely sick of the business .....As he [Cuthbert]

1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 26 Apl. 1832. Ibid.  
S.C.Roy, (Mundas, 207) says, "The Mundas still commemorate in their songs the delusive victories of the Larkas in their struggles with the British troops."  
One such song, in translation, is the following:  
 "Within Pithouria [Pitoria's] bounds,  
 The soldiers mustered strong.  
 Balanga Goa saw  
 The fighting Larkas throng.  
 At Jiki lata then  
 The Larkas' arrows flew.  
 At Dombaghat Ich'rung,  
 Their foes the Hos shot through.  
 Ah! then, on Jik'lata field  
 The soldiers vanquish'd lay.  
 At Dombaghat Ich'rung  
 The Larkas won the day".
2. Letter from Sajna Nudee, 8 Apl. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 18 Apl. 1832.  
 Also see a letter from 'Delay', N.D. Bengal Hurkaru, 9 May 1832.

is particularly anxious to settle affairs as amicably as possible, and with all practicable despatch I trust his endeavours [to settle the dispute regarding Tamar succession] will be crowned with the success they deserve.<sup>1</sup> As sickness was breaking out in the contingent Cuthbert, on arriving at Tamar, authorised their further march for Barrackpur. Wilkinson, after receiving the later surrenders, and arranging for a wing of the 50th N.I. and the Ramgarh battalion to go into cantonment for the rains in Hazaribagh,<sup>2</sup> released the other troops. On 27 April the troops for Dinapur and Benares marched under Capt. Maltby. Major Blackall with the rest of the force marched from Bamhani on 29 April, reached Barkagarh on the 1 May<sup>3</sup> and on the 2nd the right wing of the 50th proceeded via Tamar and the Jungle Mahals towards Barrackpur.

The two thousand men of the 2nd, 38th, 50th, 54th Regiments, N.I., the squadron of light cavalry, the horse artillery, foot-artillery, the Ramgarh battalion, the matchlockmen and irregulars, who had closed on Bamhni to reduce perhaps three hundred active insurgents in Singhbhum, thus dispersed. The campaign was declared successfully closed. Yet as will be seen fresh operations were very soon to be necessary in the neighbouring tribal areas. Perhaps the

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1. Letter from Kandu Patti, 15 Apl. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 24 Apl. 1832.
  2. Capt. Wilkinson to Blackall, 25 Apl. 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  3. Letter from Barkagarh 1 May 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 9 May 1832.



writer in the India Gazette, who used the pen-name Miles, was not far off the mark when he wrote of the campaign, "What a ridiculous episode it will make in the history of British India! How the future historian will laugh as he tells the tale of the worse than useless Cole hunt! Oh for the genius of a Gibbon to describe "with solemn sneer" the magnanimous exploit! Oh shade of Napoleon! if I knew of any dák that could convey a parcel in safety to thy present habitation in Elysium, most assuredly would I send thee an account of the late events in the perturbed territory, which might perchance amuse an idle hour and make thee 'wreath a smile' at the operations of that mighty Indo-British power, which it was thy fondest ambition to overthrow."<sup>1</sup>

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1. 'Miles', India Gazette, 23 Nov. 1832.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Origins of the unrest in Chota-Nagpur, Palamau and Singhbhum

Our study of the early impact of British rule in Chota-Nagpur and Palamau has made it clear that this undeveloped tribal area suffered much from the introduction of the Cornwallis system, more so because of the ignorance of tribal language and lack of respect for tribal customs on the part of the British officers who administered it. An anonymous writer in the Calcutta Review in 1869 made the point that Englishmen who had fought in New Zealand against the aborigines trying to preserve their ancient tribal rights, and who had encroached unthinkingly upon the tribal rights in land in Ireland, recognised by the Brehon laws, were scarcely likely to understand or sympathise with the tribal peasantry in Chota-Nagpur. (1) As Hutton has said, "In Chota-Nagpur the establishment of British authority led to a more general and more thorough victimization" of the tribal people of this area. (2) The 'economic

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(1) 'Kol of Chota-Nagpore', Calcutta Review, XLIX, 124.

(2) J.H. Hutton, 'Primitive Tribes', Modern India and the West, 419.



freedom' brought by British rule, and the indiscriminate enforcement of contracts by the courts of law attracted a large number of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh land-grabbers, jobbers, traders and usurers into this area.<sup>(1)</sup> They seized the land, the very basis of the tribal society, and so inevitably set in motion the "break-up of tribal solidarity and the disintegration of the village community."<sup>(2)</sup>

It has already been seen that by the time this calamity befell the tribal people, their maharaja (and many lesser rajas) had been hinduized, and that he had been bringing in "crowds of hangers-on of all kinds, whose services he rewarded, or whose goods he paid for, by the transfer of his rights over various villages."<sup>(3)</sup> This inevitably led to the ruin of the tribesmen, the original clearers of the land, who could not compete with the plainsmen in cunning or prestige.

The maharaja's primary concern was to imitate the pomp and grandeur of Hindu and Muslim zamindars, and he looked down upon his tribal ryots as marauders and savages. Thus, Gorind Nath Sahi, who succeeded to the estate in 1808,

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(1) J.H. Hutton, 'Primitive Tribes', Modern India and the West, 730.

(2) ibid. 430.

(3) S.C. Roy, Mundas, Introduction by E.A. Gait.



described the inhabitants of Chota-Nagpur as "wild mountaineers and robbers, who are incapable of understanding any order and will not listen to reason", and as "nothing but a set of lawless mountaineers".<sup>(1)</sup> The next maharaja, Jagannath Sahi, who succeeded to the estate in 1822, had a positive hatred for his fellow-tribesmen. In his petition to Government during the unrest of 1832 he described them as low caste, turbulent wretches who "in person resemble man, but in mind wild beasts".<sup>(2)</sup>

This attitude of derision was encouraged by the large number of his non-tribal advisers and servants from the plains of Bihar and Orissa - the priests, the divans, the tahsildars, adventurers and fortune-seekers. Thus, in 1818 a certain Narainbhatta Brahmachari (a religious mendicant) persuaded Maharaja Govind Nath Sahi to believe that an old woman, Adhar-Dai, had destroyed his children by witchcraft, saying that this had been revealed to him by the image of God Kapil Nath at Doesa before which he had fasted for nine days.<sup>(3)</sup> The barkandazes, who were

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- (1) Petition, Raja Govind Nath, Recd. 2 May 1808, Para 3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 11 of 22 July 1808. (55/13).  
 (2) Petition, Raja Jagannath, 25 March 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.  
 (3) Rangarh Magistrate to Govt., 6 Apl. 1819, Para 12 B.C.746/20327.



suspected of having committed the murder of this woman and her family were, with a few exceptions, all non-tribal adventurers who had found service at the maharaja's court. (1)

The maharaja, being of an "indecisive and procrastinating character" (2), could not assert his authority, and the non-tribal adventurers in his service made him a non-entity. He was "wholly immersed in religious ceremonies and observances" and left "the entire management of his estate to a set of worthless and corrupt Amlah", who took "every advantage of his supineness with regard to worldly affairs." (3)

Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, who succeeded his father at the young age of 19, was not expected to acquit himself better than his father, and in his time the grip of the non-tribal adventurers upon the administration became still firmer. Cuthbert, the officiating collector, rightly predicted, on his accession, that "the young Rajah probably like his father will be a mere cypher in his Raj and everything as formerly will be conducted by the Aumlah." (4)

(1) Ramgarh Magistrate to Govt., 6 Apl. 1819, Para 12 B.C.746/20327. See chapter II.

(2) W. Smith, Joint Magistrate, <sup>Chota Nagpur</sup> and officiating collector, Chota-Nagpur, Ramgarh, to Board, 4 March 1820, Beng. Rev. Cons. 17 of 22 June 1821 (58/60).

(3) W. Smith to Board, 28 Sept. 1819, Ibid.

(4) Cuthbert to Govt., 1 Aug. 1822, Beng. Rev. Cons. 28 of 8 Aug. 1822 (59/21).



A report of 1823 shows that his main interest, like his father's, was the upkeep of temples (especially the snake temple), the worship of Hindu goddesses and the celebration of Dashahara festival on a lavish scale.<sup>(1)</sup> In the maintenance of the pomp and grandeur of his court too, he did not lag behind his forefathers: more than a year after his succession, he was still pressing the political agent on this frontier to attend the installation ceremony and to present him with a Khillat, as had been done in the case of his father and grandfather.<sup>(2)</sup> He had an unhappy knack of buying costly horses and clothes on credit from foreign merchants: several Pathans (popularly called Moghuls), Sikhs, and others who came to him as horse-dealers and shawl and brocade merchants, secured enormous sums for their goods and even obtained land from the maharaja in exchange for their luxury goods.<sup>(3)</sup>

Such a chief could not have any interest in the plight of his tribal subjects. So while the tribal peasants were ousted by the non-tribal settlers, the whole business of revenue collection and internal management was left in the hands of the unscrupulous Hindu diwan and his foreign subordinates. One such diwan was a Brahman named Joaram

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(1) N. Smith, Joint Magistrate, Chota-Nagpur, to Govt., Para 8, 19 June 1823, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 21 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/38).

(2) Beng. Rev. Cons. 46 of 2 Jan. 1824 (59/61).

(3) Supplement, Calcutta (Govt.) Gazette 1 Dec. 1880.



whose zeal by 1827 had degenerated "into rapacity and extortion, thereby producing ruin to the people and consequently depopulation to the province".<sup>(1)</sup> The maharaja, who evinced "neither talent nor inclination for business",<sup>(2)</sup> had given this new diwan a free hand, and the diwan, to please his master, sought to increase the income of the estate by all possible means. Thus, in 1827 he set up a claim to recover a great part of the jagirs on the plea that the jagirdars were mere mortgagees, and that their money had been more than paid through the yields of the jagirs.<sup>(3)</sup> These unprecedented claims were, however, rejected by the Ramgarh magistrate who "in consequence of the fears and representations of many of the respectable inhabitants of the Pergunnah as well as certain indications in the conduct of this man", compelled him "to enter into recognizances not to dispossess any of the present occupants from their lands, nor to do any act contrary to the Regulations of Government or the customs of the Pergunnah"<sup>(4)</sup>. Such an undertaking, however, in the absence of close supervision, was meaningless.

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(1) Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para 9, Beng. G. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138/22).

(2) Ibid. Para 8.

(3) Ibid. Para 13.

(4) Ibid. Para 10.



Indeed, every species of oppression was perpetrated on the tribal peasantry. According to Cuthbert, the desertion of many villages could "chiefly be imputed to the conduct of the principal landholders towards their ryots, and their not granting receipts for the payment of rents, which alone opens a wide door to abuse: add to this the effects of the feudal system, which, under the most favourable circumstances, must ever act as a check to the increase of population, by damping the industry and independence of the people."<sup>(1)</sup> The maharaja and the lesser rajas received begari (forced labour) from the tenants.<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, several duties known as rasum, gangit, nutfurka, etc., were levied.<sup>(3)</sup> The rapacious non-tribal servants of the chiefs fleeced the tribal peasants whenever they visited the villages.

Under a fully tribal system, when custom remained a powerful barrier to excess, the feudal system which Cuthbert assumed to be so harmful, had been quite tolerable. But when the non-tribal servants of the hinduized chiefs worked the same system, they made it an instrument of oppression and extortion. If rent fell in arrears, a

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(1) Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para. 27.

(2) Ibid. Para. 29.

(3) Ibid. Para. 48.



jamadar at eight annas a day talbana (subsistence allowance) or sometimes two at the same rate, accompanied by three or four barkandazes at one and a half annas a day, were sent from Palkote, the maharaja's cutchery to collect the dues. They stayed in the village, were fed at the expense of the ryots, sometimes for several months, and in the end the talbana for the whole period of stay was realized from the poor villagers. (1) Even when most of the ryots had paid their dues, these servants were retained in the villages on the excuse that a trifling amount was still due. The main motive of the maharaja, and the lesser zamindars, was to keep up their revenue and police establishments on a small pay, the balance being made up by talbana. (2) Sometimes the manager of the farmer of a village also assessed the ryots separately on the pretext that he had to pay a part of the talbana of the maharaja's servants and had to feed them. (3)

No doubt some of the abwabs, e.g. the Dashahara salami (contribution towards the celebration of the Dashahara festival), were paid willingly, because they would add to the grandeur of the maharaja's court, but

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(1) Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 37, Misc. Despatch Book, No. 247, G.G.'s Agents Office, Patna Archives.

(2) Ibid. Para. 38.

(3) Ibid. Para. 39.



the high-handedness of the peons, the tahsildar and other non-tribal servants of the maharaja was felt very sorely by the tribesmen. These servants not only seized goats and buffaloes for sacrifice at the altar of the goddess, but they also took bribes to leave some of the villagers untouched. (1)

All these oppressions and extortions might have been checked had there been a closer control by the Ramgarh authorities. But unfortunately the civil station was far removed from the pargana, even though several officers in the past had emphasised the necessity of moving it to a nearer place. (2) Even when heavy mortality at the Sherghati jail in 1827 suggested that a move to more healthy Hazaribagh was necessary, the Government still made no move. (3)

While the civil station thus remained remote from Chota-Nagpur, nothing was done to post any European officer

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(1) Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 42.

(2) cf. Roughsedge to Ramgarh Magistrate, 5 May 1809, Para 12, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 25 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/38). Also see Beng. Rev. Cons. 19 of 28 May 1824 (60/7).

(3) Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 14 of 18 Oct. 1827 (138/31). Till 1825 courts were held alternately at Chatra and Sherghati. But in January 1826 the civil station was fixed at Sherghati, a place more distant from Chota-Nagpur than Chatra; Resolution, Govt., 26 Jan. 1826, Para. 15, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 32 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/39).



in the tribal area. The argument, here, was that Chota-Nagpur was most unhealthy. French, the Rangarh magistrate, for example, thought in 1817 that the constant residence of a joint magistrate in this area "would almost certainly be attended with the destruction of the person appointed."<sup>(1)</sup> The most that was considered feasible was an annual visit by the magistrate.<sup>(2)</sup> But though in 1821 the Joint Magistrate and Assistant Collector for Chota-Nagpur was specially directed to visit the pargana during a favourable season and to establish a more vigilant superintendence over its affairs<sup>(3)</sup>, Cuthbert in 1827 and again in 1830 admitted that no superior officer had visited the area for several years<sup>(4)</sup> due to the pressure of work at the civil station. He admitted, however, that the "watchful attention of the Magistrate over the interests and welfare of the people" was the surest method of ameliorating their lot.<sup>(5)</sup> Moreover, he reported in 1830, "the great

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- (1) Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 9 of 23 May 1817 (132/58).  
 (2) As far back as 1809 Houghsedge had laid emphasis on such a tour: Houghsedge to Rangarh Magistrate, 5 May 1809, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 25 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/38).  
 (3) Memorandum, Shakespear, 20 Jan. 1826, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 31 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/39).  
 (4) Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para. 76, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138/22).  
 (5) Also see Cuthbert to Govt., 15 Apl. 1830, Para. 14, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 27 of 11 May 1830 (139/51).  
 (5) Cuthbert to Govt., 21 Apl. 1827, Para. 108, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138/22).



distance of the Magistrate's residence from the pergunna renders the journey <sup>to the</sup> ~~to the~~ <sup>sudder</sup> station expensive and inconvenient to prosecutors and witnesses and this of itself naturally tends to the concealment of crime. The people are reluctant in coming forward to give information of a robbery committed on their property to a small amount, knowing that themselves and witnesses will have to proceed to Sheherghotty, a distance of 50 Coss generally, and sometimes more to prove the facts."<sup>(1)</sup>

The district was not altogether fortunate in the officers appointed to it. Nathaniel Smith<sup>(2)</sup> who, as has been seen, was responsible for the introduction of the abkari and abolition of rahdari dues, was formally charged by the Nizam <sup>la</sup> Adalat with "eccentricity of character."<sup>(3)</sup> His order of 10 February 1822 that the maharaja should appoint a police daroga who should be "respectable and very humble and very foolish (Nihayut bewuquf) and who may not possess any knowledge of his duty towards the

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- (1) Cuthbert to Govt., 15 Apl. 1830, Para. 8, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons 27 of 11 May 1830 (139/51). He admitted that whenever cases came before him "of people having neglected to report trivial thefts in Chota-Nagpoor, I fully enter their feelings, make allowance for the great distance they have to come and act as mildly towards them as circumstances will permit."
- (2) He was in charge of Chota-Nagpur from February 1821 to November 1825 with a few short breaks. He also officiated as the Magistrate and Collector of Ramgarh for some time in this period: Register of E.I.Co.'s Bengal Civil Servants, 350.
- (3) Register, Nizam Adalat, to Govt., 5 Sept. 1823, Para. 2, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 23 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/38).



Company,"<sup>(1)</sup> certainly supports the charge. So does his order to the thanadars to report only cases of highway robbery, theft, burglary, affrays and no other [thus murder and dacoity were excluded.]<sup>(2)</sup> Again, he ordered in one of his public proceedings that "a proclamation be issued declaring that no zemindar or Talookdar shall exact the sayer duties from merchants, in the event of the demand being made, the merchants may beat the person making such demand with their sticks..., and moreover that it be inserted in the proclamation, that a merchant may strike with a sword any person who demands the sayer duties, but as under all circumstances it is unadvisable to use a sword, it is sufficient that they beat him with their sticks."<sup>(3)</sup> The Nizamat Adalat called this proceeding "strange and irregular, and likely to operate perniciously."<sup>(4)</sup> Similarly with regard to his peculiar letter to the

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(1) J.B. Elliot, 4th Judge, Patna Court of Circuit, to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 2 July 1823, Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Proceedings of Smith, 9 Feb. 1822, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 23 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/38).

(4) Register, Nizamat Adalat, to Patna Court of Circuit, 15 Sept. 1823, Ibid.



superintendent of police, <sup>(1)</sup> the Adalat hoped "that Mr. Nathaniel Smith will in future exercise a more rigid control over his feelings, his imagination, and his pen." <sup>(2)</sup>

Fortunately Smith did not stay for long <sup>(3)</sup>, but Cuthbert, who remained in this district for more than a decade from 1821 onwards was no better choice. <sup>(4)</sup> In his case it was not eccentricity but an unimaginative zeal that made him an unwise choice. It was he, as has been seen, who introduced the tax on rice beer, and pressed for the cultivation of the opium poppy. It was at his suggestion that a non-tribal Indian officer was appointed

(1) Ibid. This was the letter of 21 Apl. 1822 in which Smith had discussed a criminal case of Chota-Nagpur in a peculiar style.

(2) Ibid.

(3) This area was saved from the innovations resulting from his "favourite idea" that the jagirdars of Chota-Nagpur were similar to the talukdars of Bengal. That was why he had pressed the Board of Revenue that they should be freed from subordination to the maharaja. Moreover, he had wanted the introduction of partition laws (which had been prohibited in 1800) to this area - a suggestion which, according to Cuthbert, would have tended "to disseminate poverty and misery than to promote prosperity and happiness." Cuthbert to Govt., 17 July 1824, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 36 of 26 Aug. 1824 (136/31).

(4) He had served as an officiating district magistrate in Saharanpur and Meerut before being appointed Judge-Magistrate of Ramgarh on 13 April 1821. In October he took charge of the collectorship for some time. After that he continued to serve in the district till April 1832, with a break of a few months in 1825. Register of E.I.Co's Bengal Civil Servants, 82-83. From January 1826 he was the Magistrate-Judge and Collector of Ramgarh with a special salary of Rs 3,000 and a travelling allowance of Rs.300. Resolution, Govt., 26 Jan. 1826, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 31 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/39).



as munsif in Chota Nagpur<sup>(1)</sup> in 1825, though this "was vehemently objected to" and the maharaja and the landholders "used every means to dissuade the ryots from resorting to such a tribunal."<sup>(2)</sup> Instead of realizing that such a tribunal encroached upon the powers of the tribal panchayats under the tribal chiefs, he dismissed the protests as originating "in the most sordid and interested motives" and he thought that "the arrangement might promote a more intimate knowledge of the Regulations amongst this rude people and thereby tend to their civilization and improvement."<sup>(3)</sup> Indeed, he was obsessed with the idea of civilizing these people - questioning them in their villages as to their peculiar customs, their rights, profits from different trades, and "more particularly on their superstitions", e.g. witchcraft.<sup>(4)</sup> He went to the length of threatening them with severe punishment if witches were punished by the panchayat.

He also offended the hinduized maharaja and other zamindar by interfering with sati<sup>(5)</sup> and by introducing the zamindari dak<sup>(6)</sup>. In fact, Cuthbert was over-ambitious in

(1) By 1830 there were two munsifs in this area, one at Lohardugga and the other at Bundu: Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 27 of 11 May 1830 (139).

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(2) Cuthbert to Govt. 21 Apl.1827, Para.55, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons. 53 of 14 June 1827 (138)

(3) Ibid, Para. 56.

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(4) Ibid. Para. 98.

(5) Ibid. Para. 95.

(6) Ibid. Para.101.



seeking vast powers for himself to eradicate by administrative edict all the evils of a backward society: "In Ranghur where the people are for the most part rude and uncivilized, the greatest political advantages may be expected from the general inspection, care, consideration and exertions of officers vested with consolidated powers."<sup>(1)</sup> At the same time he was over-optimistic. In 1827 he thought that the constant fends and predatory habits which had affected the crops and property of the people here in the past, had been stopped, that the "human sacrifices" which "were annually offered up by the Rajah" had been prohibited, that the "practices of putting persons to death for sorcery" was "now hardly to be heard of", and that "the demoralizing custom of compounding punishment" no longer existed.<sup>(2)</sup> He dreamt of changing the habits of the tribal people by a miracle, as it were. "The people," he wrote, "are simple, obedient and willing and can be moulded at [to] anything by a zealous and accessible officer, who impresses on their minds that he is working for their benefit. It is to these annual tours then, that I chiefly look to reform the manners of the people, emancipate them from the thralldom of their superiors,

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(1) Ibid. Para. 105. He wanted the powers of supervising the salt-agent, opium production, etc.

(2) Ibid. Paras. 107-108.



to develop the capacities of the country and encourage industry and the extension of agriculture and to remedy the inveterate abuses of the feudal system."<sup>(1)</sup>

It was with such adventurous and grandiose ideas that Cuthbert, like Smith, used to toy. Like Smith, too, he never mentioned the real malady - the infiltration of non-tribal elements in the tribal society - in his long reports. Only a few months before the unrest broke out he stated after his tour, that Chota-Nagpur was as fruitful as a garden. No wonder, therefore, that he was charged with having "misled the government by prophesying smooth things."<sup>(2)</sup> He was particularly censured by Blunt, the third member of the Calcutta Council, because "on the very eve of a general insurrection" he represented "the country and the people to be in a state of prosperity, content and happiness."<sup>(3)</sup> "...The ends for which Mr. Cuthbert was entrusted with enlarged powers [in 1826]," remarked Blunt, "have been

(1) Ibid. Para. 108.

(2) 'Kols of Chota Nagpar', Calcutta Review, XLIX. Also Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl.1832, Paras.11-12. B.C.1363/54227.

(3) Ibid. Para. 42.



utterly defeated. (1) Had those powers been exercised efficiently, had Mr. Cuthbert duly informed himself of the state of the district committed to his charge, and had he exercised a due control over the subordinate native officers of Government and others subject to his authority, I am compelled to declare my firm belief that this insurrection would never have occurred." (2)

(1) On 26 January 1826 he was vested with the united powers of Judge, Magistrate and Collector under Regulation V, 1825, in view of the peculiar circumstances of the district. Resolution, Govt., 26 Jan. 1826, Para 9, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 32 of 26 Jan. 1826. (137). The secretary of the Judicial department, 39 while recommending this measure, had remarked that on the transfer of Cuthbert, "who has been in charge of the district for the last five years," the district "would be in new hands, Government deprived of services of an officer who has shewn himself eminently qualified by his disposition and talents to conduct the duties of a situation which he has so long held." He had further observed, "There are few situations under Government in which a mild and conciliatory line of conduct is so much required as in the management of the rude and half civilized people who inhabit the remote parts of the district. By an indulgent consideration of their character and circumstances they may be easily brought to co-operate with their rulers in any plans for ameliorating their condition whereas, harsh and coercive measures, or any exaction of the observance of unnecessary forms, must always have a directly opposite tendency and prove in the end wholly unsuccessful and injurious." Memorandums Shakespear, 20 Jan. 1826, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 31 of 26 Jan. 1826. (137/39).

(2) Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl. 1832, Para. 39, B.C.1363/54227.



Cuthbert's total want of information about Chota-Nagpur, Blunt thought, could only be accounted for in one of two ways - "either his native officers had the means of keeping back complaints from him; or the parties aggrieved had no hope of obtaining redress by complaining." (1) Of these the former seems the more likely, for though Cuthbert was many years in the tribal area he never learnt the local language, and so had to rely entirely upon his subordinates. (Dent, his successor, was a good linguist.) But even more important Cuthbert was not a sympathetic administrator or in his idealism underestimated the magnitude of the task of transforming a whole society and the need for safeguards at every step. What was needed was the imaginative sympathy of a Cleveland, an Outram, a Wilkinson, a Dixon, an Evans or a Macpherson, who had laboured in the cause of humanity "without the stimulating and sustaining aid of a single note of popular applause." (2) A newspaper correspondent rightly remarked "Call to mind, Mr. Editor, a case in times gone by - of one Cleveland at Boglepoor [Bhagalpur] - send a Mr. Cleveland to the Coles and you

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Kaye, Administration of the East India Company, 465. Sir J. Outram worked among the Gonds and Cleveland among the Santhals in the Raj Mahal Hills in Bihar: 'Kold of Chota Nagpar,' Calcutta Review, XLIX.



will have no occasion to augment the Ramghur Battalion."<sup>(1)</sup>

The official apathy and ignorance may, therefore, be considered an important cause of the unrest. Professor Haimendorf has said that all tribal rebellions "were defensive movements: they are the last resort of tribes men driven to despair by the encroachments of outsiders on their land or economic resources. As such they could have all been avoided had the authorities recognized the aborigines' grievances and taken steps to remedy them not, as it happened in most cases, after the rising, but before the pressure on the tribesmen had made an attack unavoidable."<sup>(2)</sup>

This is certainly true of the unrest of December 1831, when it began, "so utterly ignorant were the civil functionaries in that part of the country of the causes which occasioned it, of the grounds which the people had for discontent, or of what was really going on, that it was for some time looked upon as some petty disturbance or robbery, which a few extra police officers would soon effectually suppress."<sup>(3)</sup> The Court of Directors laid due emphasis on this fact: "With regard to the causes to which the insurrection, first in Chota Nagpore and subsequently in the Jungle Estates, is to be attributed, we have to remark generally that the

(1) 'U.N.S.' Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832.

(2) 'The Aboriginal Rebellions of the Deccan', Man in India, Rebellion Number, XXV, No.4, Dec.1945.

(3) F.J. Shore, Notes on Indian Affairs, II, 112, Footnote.



local officers seem to have been very imperfectly and incorrectly informed as to the real condition of that part of the country."<sup>(1)</sup>

A natural corollary to this official ignorance, apathy or incompetence, at whatever level displayed, was the reduction in the number of the Ramgah battalion which for about half a century had been stationed at Hazanbagh to deal with such emergencies. True, some people in 1832 thought that the putting of this battalion on its former footing "would be aiding and abetting and assisting the very cause of the present disturbances."<sup>(2)</sup> But the general consensus of opinion was that an adequate force must have acted as a deterrent. "The great mistake committed," said a correspondent of a Calcutta paper, "was the reduction of the Ramghur Battalion, without sending other troops."<sup>(3)</sup> Another correspondent expressed the opinion that "...the reduction of the strength of the Ramghur Battalion alone would have been the signal for warfare and confusion."<sup>(4)</sup>

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- (1) Court of Directors to Bengal Govt., 16 Sept. 1835, Para. 6, India and Bengal, Despatches. Vol. 6, pp.370-371. The views of the Directors may have been true - but one may add that they were scarcely blameless themselves. They expected from officers left in sole charge of vast districts an understanding of local languages and customs which a modern anthropologist only feels able to acquire (working within the confines of a single village) by a year or two years' undivided study.
- (2) 'U.N.S.', Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Apl. 1832.
- (3) 'Old Grundy', 6 March 1832, India Gazette, 16 March 1832.
- (4) Report from Banta Hajam, 16 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 23 March 1832.



This view was supported in the editorial column of that day: "The reduced strength of the Ramghur Battalion permitted the insurgents to gain head and is a strong witness against the penny wise and pound foolish system of military clipping." Beveridge struck the same note in 1862 when he wrote that "these insurrections were doubtless encouraged by the extent to which government, in its anxiety to meet the wishes of the directors on the subject of retrenchment, had carried the reduction of its military establishments."<sup>(1)</sup> Wilson also criticised this "mistaken economy of reducing its military strength below the amount required to awe and control the barbarous border tribes."<sup>(2)</sup> "As long as a strong curle was maintained upon the Koles and Dangas of Sambhalpur and Singbhum by the superintendence of a political Agent, who was empowered to interfere authoritatively for the preservation of internal peace, and had at his disposal a military force sufficient to overawe the refractory, some degree of order was maintained.. When the powers of the Agent were curtailed, and the troops on the frontier reduced, the barbarous tribes relapsed into the indulgence of their former propensities."<sup>(3)</sup> Shore in 1837 went to the length

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(1) Comprehensive History of India, II, 207.

(2) Mill's History of British India, 1858, IX, 231.

(3) Ibid. 231-232.



of saying that "it is universally acknowledged, that the constant presence of our troops alone prevents disturbances, or, in plain English, insurrection." (A)

One may not agree that the presence of an adequate force at hand would have prevented the outbreak, nor agree that with the writers' assumptions that force was a cure-all, but that the absence of such a force negatively helped the unrest cannot be denied. The risings certainly would not have assumed such proportions if the authorities had been alert with sufficient force. As the Patna divisional commissioner pointed out, "Whatever may be ascertained to be the origin of the disturbances, there can be no doubt that they would readily have been checked, or prevented from spreading to any extent if Captain Wilkinson had had at his disposal a force of the description formerly maintained at Hazareebaug, consisting of Irregular Horse as well as a much larger body of Infantry than at present." (1) As it was the insurrection went on gaining momentum because the authorities were helpless till the arrival of troops. (2) According to a newspaper correspondent, "it was not until after the insurgents had discovered how totally unable the

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(A) Notes, I, 158

(1) Lambert to Govt., 14 Feb. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1362/54224.

(2) Towards the end of January. See Chapter III.



authorities on the spot were to meet force by force, that they extended the scene of their operations, increased their adherents, and finally concocted the wildest schemes." (1) He further posed a very sane query, "Will rich coffers and an overflowing treasury in consequences of reduced establishments, civil and military, compensate for all this misery?" (2)

In spite of the absence of an adequate military force, an efficient police could have faced the situation. "Had the police of the country been properly organized," said a correspondent, "these disturbances could not possibly have taken place, and our officers and men would not have been obliged to enter upon a service, which promises neither honour to their arms, nor brilliancy to their reputation." (3) We have already seen how several attempts had been made since 1809 to supplement the zamindari (or ghatwali) police of the maharaja with a regular police, and how those attempts had failed mainly because of the employment of outsiders as police darogas. Colvin in 1821 reported that only a purely zamindari police could succeed in this area. (4)

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(1) 'Jasoos', 4 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 March 1832.

(2) Ibid.

(3) 'An Officer', 29 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 12 March 1832.

(4) Colvin to Govt., 10 Apl. 1821, Paras. 29-59; Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of June 1821 (134). He deplored the neglect of the ghatwals.



Only two years after this the Magistrate of Ramgarh reported that the police of this area had been "long considered 'zemindarce' whereas substantially it differs in nothing from that of regular districts except that, independent of the avowed and notorious defects of the Regular Thannadarce system, another most grievous evil has been added in the uncertainty of payment of which the police officers in Nagpore have but too much reason to complain..."<sup>(1)</sup>

N. Smith wrote in very similar terms to the Nizamat Adalat a few months after this." In 1809 it was thought expedient to introduce an anomalous system in this pergunnah, which was neither zemindary nor Government police.. The consequences of this arrangement were that the zemindars lost all influence, and had no more to say to the police than those in any common district with this disadvantage in Nagpore, that to all the defects of our regular police system we superadded another in the uncertainty of payment.<sup>(2)</sup>"

Cuthbert, however, was not at first in favour of the zamindari police, though by 1830 he admitted the unpopularity and inefficiency of the regular police, and he invested the subordinate rajas with police powers. However, the continued presence of the non-tribal darogas and barkandazes thwarted the whole plan.

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- (1) Magistrate to Superintendent of Police, Lower Provinces, 8 Aug. 1823, Para 3, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 25 & 26 of Jan.1826 (137/38).
- (2) N. Smith to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 17 Nov.1823, Beng. Cr.Judl.Cons. 24 & 26 Jan, 1826 (137/38).

How very obnoxious these darogas had become was proved in the course of the investigation in 1832. The burning of several thanas with their records early in 1832<sup>(1)</sup> showed the wrath of the people towards the official police system. Blunt lamented that the maharaja had not been left in charge of a purely zamindari police as had happened in most of the Jungle Mahals where "most of the stipendary police establishments before existing on the part of Government were withdrawn."<sup>(2)</sup> The six police thanas of Maharajganj, Jhikochatti, Barwa, Barkagarh, Tamar and Tori with a daroga, a jamadar, a mohurir, and a small number of barkandazes - all from outside - were an eyesore to the vast number of ghatwais, chalkidas and others. Drummond commented in 1841 that the zamindari police which owed "its existence solely to a mutual understanding and acquiescence subsisting between parties", was "surely the most desirable that could be established and tenfold more effectual than any other which could be substituted by the Government, whose native police would in all probability not only increase the toll [in the passes] but tend by their insolent arrogance to produce discontent and insurrection throughout the country."<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) One such thana was at Jhikochatti; J. Master to Nizamat Adalat, 22 Oct. 1832; Trial No.18, B.C.1502/58893.

(2) Blunt, Minute, 28 Jan. 1832, Para. 3, B.C.1363/54227.

(3) Drummond, N.S. statistical Account, 19.



Like the police thanas, the civil, judicial, revenue, excise and salt establishments of the Government in this area were manned by plains people whose sole motive was to fleece the poor tribal cultivators. Worse still, the nazim, the darungo, the salt-daroga and the peons of the different departments were not only corrupt, they also invariably sided with the tribal farmers of land who were dispossessing the tribal landholders of their lands.

At the same time, the permanent settlement of revenue and the civil and criminal laws had also helped the zamindars and the outsiders in dispossessing the tribal tenants. The ryot had gained nothing from the zamindars "whose invariable policy has been to grind him down, to enhance his rents, leaving no margin for a saving."<sup>(1)</sup> Major Lees most aptly remarked that "His Excellency [Lord Cornwallis] no doubt thought to make English landlords of the zamindars of Bengal: but it is patent to the world that he succeeded only in making Irish ones."<sup>(2)</sup> This change of status was more keenly felt in this tribal area where the original clearers of land had an hereditary interest and where they had been paying only a quit-rent or no rent at all in some cases. The

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(1) 'The Kols of Chota Nagpore', Calcutta Review, XLIX.

(2) Quoted from Land and Labour, Ibid.



Bhuinhas (or Khutkhattiar) or the original clearers of the land held their land rent free.<sup>(1)</sup> But now their age-old rights were assailed, and even the old tribal ryots had to work on the land for the benefit of others. As a newspaper correspondent said, some modification was essential in the "perpetual settlement", so that these original clearers of land had an interest in the land again.<sup>(2)</sup>

Early in 1832 Major Sutherland argued of the Kols that "Like the Gonds of the Nagpore territory, the Bheels of the North-Western part of India and other tribes of that nature, they require a peculiar form of Government and that which we have latterly introduced into this country does not seem suitable."<sup>(3)</sup> Blunt, arguing from his experience, held that like the poligars of the Northern Circars and the tribal people of the hilly tributary estates of Orissa, these people ought to have been put outside the ordinary regulations<sup>(4)</sup>. He further commented that "the system of civil administration which may be well-calculated to protect the rights and to promote the happiness of the people in our Regulation provinces cannot with advantage or safety be extended to the Jungle Estates; and that for many years to come, the extension of our laws and of the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of justice in such tracts will be

(1) Davidson to Duseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 14, Misc. Dispatch Bk, No. 247, G.G.'s Agents Office, Patna Archives.

(2) Old Grundy, India Gazette, 4 Apl. 1832.

(3) Sutherland to Govt. N.D., B.C. 1363/54227

(4) Blunt, Minute, 27 Apl. 1832, Ibid.



both premature and injurious both to the peace of the country and to the welfare of the people, and I think a serious error was committed in introducing our Regulations into Chota Nagpore or in attempting to create a revenue from tax to be levied from subjects so uncivilized and so poor."<sup>(1)</sup>

Such remarks had also been made in the years immediately preceding the unrest. For example, Colvin, in his long report on the Tamar disturbances, had suggested in 1821 that "a strict adherence to the Regulations also might in many instances be dispensed with."<sup>(2)</sup> "The Regulations," he noted further, "are not well adapted to the character of the greater portion of the inhabitants and it would perhaps have been more advisable [*sic*] had they not been extended to them originally, but the only alternatives now remaining are to enforce obedience to them or releasing the Pergunnah at once from their control, place it on the same footing as the tributary Mehals of Cuttack and in making a selection of the two, the success with which the introduction of the Regulations under the system above alluded to, has been crowned in this zillah would induce me to adopt the former."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Colvin to Govt., 10 Apl. 1821, Para.63, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons.16 of 8 June, 1821 (134/53).

(3) Ibid., Para. 66.



N. Smith in 1823 had written in the same vein when he had urged the Government to place Chota Nagpur "under a more summary system of management than is sanctioned by the existing Regulations."<sup>(1)</sup> "The arguments for a change in the mode of administering criminal justice in these parts," he had written, "resolves [*sic*] into three heads, first the expediency of a more rapid administration of criminal justice in consequence of the tendency to violence, which has displayed itself on a vast variety of occasions, amongst the people of Palamoo; secondly the simple character of criminal trials, arising from the rude nature of the people, the practice of voluntary confessions, or the otherwise satisfactory nature of the proof adduced, rendering unnecessary here, the complicated system of jurisprudence, the grand object of which is to guard against the possibility of error in the criminal judge and thirdly the great geographical extent of the district and the nature of the country, its difficult gauts [*ghats*], and vast forests rendering it an almost intolerable inconvenience for witnesses, twice if not oftener to attend a trial."<sup>(2)</sup>

With regard to civil administration also he had thought many of these inconveniences led to a failure of justice.

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(1) N. Smith to Govt., 19 June 1823, Para.8, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons.21 of 26 Jan., 1826 (137/38).

(2) Ibid., Para. 9.



The "total inability of the people to cope with our forms of proceeding, and the process of our courts", he had written, "led to the explosion of the combustible materials."<sup>(1)</sup> "In Palamow this inability patiently to endure the tyranny of forms, and injustice under colour of law has displayed itself in acts of violence; while in Nagpoor [Chota Nagpur] it has given rise to conspiracies of the most atrocious description."<sup>(2)</sup> He had frankly confessed, "I find it easier to decide the rich man's than the poor man's cause. In the rich man's case the system works as we contemplate it in our regulations; but the poor man has to learn that the machinery of an Arnold's time-keeper, when once out of order in any, even the minutest parts, renders the instrument useless; and perhaps in his case, Colonel Wilkes may be right where he considers the mechanism of a smoke-jack, as better adapted to the exigencies of these people than that of the finest chronometer."<sup>(3)</sup> In support of his argument that "what is good in theory is bad in practice and vice versa," he had given several illustrations from the cases of tribal peoples he had tried at Chatra, and had suggested to the Government "the expediency of extending to this part of the

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(1) Ibid, Para. 10.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.



country, the principles of Legislation adopted for the Garrow Hills."<sup>(1)</sup> On the other hand, adverting to "the great extent of the country, the extraordinary dissimilarity in the different tribes which displays itself, now in a variety of districts, but in ~~to~~ a total diversity of language, to the great variety of tenures and rights and finally to the superior grade which these people have attained in civilization compared with the savage tribes on the North East frontier," he had thought that the rules with regard to Garrow Hill area might be modified in some ways to suit the requirements of this area.<sup>(2)</sup> In short, Smith had voted for quickness of decision and for the removal of unnecessary complicated forms of judicial procedure, because those formalities and delay "the necessity of which they are unable to comprehend, lead them to have recourse to the main ~~more~~ speedy decision of arms."<sup>(3)</sup>

In the same way the unsuitability of the regular police system for this area had been emphasised by Blunt, Fleming, Colvin, N. Smith and Cuthbert (in the later years of his office). Fleming, <sup>who</sup> had been the Magistrate of Bamgarh before Cuthbert, had gone to the length of suggesting that the

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(1) Ibid. Para. 14.

(2) Ibid. Para. 15.

(3) Memorandum, Shakespear, 20 Jan. 1826, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 31 of 26 Jan. 1826 (137/39)



zamindars might think that the charge of police gave them consequence and that they would feel themselves disgraced by being deprived of it, while the nature of the country was such that without their influence and assistance it would be impossible to apprehend offenders.<sup>(1)</sup>

Yet nothing was done to develop a purely indigenous police system nor to change the complicated machinery of British administration. The only changes effected were the uniting of the offices of the Judge, the Collector and the Magistrate of Ramgarh in 1826, and the abolition of the unpopular post of native superintendent of police, these, too, mainly for the sake of economy.

Cuthbert in the later years of his office here had repeatedly pointed out the unsuitability of the ordinary laws for this area. Only a few months before the unrest, he had reported on the abuse of the law of distraint regarding the sale of property for the recovery of the arrears of rent. "The inhabitants," he wrote, "are often exposed to loss, hardship, and all those impositions which corrupt officers and crafty vakeels know so well how to practise on the ignorant. Regulation 5 of 1812 affords the people no protection, they being for the most part unacquainted with

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(1) Ibid.

~~(2) Cuthbert to Patna Commissioner, 14 March 1831, B.C.1502/58894~~



its provisions." (1) But before Cuthbert could take any action to forbid the services of the professional lawyers in the munsif's court, much harm had already been done to the tribesmen. The poor, unsophisticated kol, if ever he went to the court, could hardly stand the searchlight of cross-examination. Dent admitted in 1833 that the two recently established munsif's courts were looked upon by the kol with awe as instruments of oppression, which only helped the creditors and the landholders to recover their money and rents respectively. (2)

Spry noted in 1837, "In our revenue assessments and collections, such is the nature of this part of the country, we are compelled to depend, in a great measure, upon the native officers of the courts, a class of men so badly paid for their services that whenever the fear of detection is removed they tyrannize over and oppress the cultivators." (3) Indeed the administration of the area in 1831 "had all the faults of a rigidly legal system, applied unscrupulously over an unwieldy extent of country, by officials who had the scantiest knowledge of the people with whom they were dealing." (4) On the one hand, the higher district authorities

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(1) Cuthbert to Patna Commissioner, 14 March 1831, B.C.1502/58894.

(2) Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58891

(3) Modern India, I, 116-117.

(4) Hunter, Statistical Account, XVI, 20.



were inaccessible, on the other the subordinate non-tribal officers were enemies of tribal interests. The hinduized maharaja and the lesser rajas, irritated at their loss of power and prestige, and committed to the non-tribal settlers, would not help the tribesmen. No wonder, therefore, that the tribesmen felt that "they were neglected by their new masters, oppressed by aliens and deprived of the means they had formerly possessed of obtaining redress through their own chief."<sup>(1)</sup>

If the Kols went to the non-tribal daroga to complain of the loss of land, or of some manhandling by the foreign settlers, they found every influence arranged against them, and "a host of witnesses in the pay of the opposite party" to prove that the poor Kol "had not only no rights in the land, but was a turbulent rebel besides."<sup>(2)</sup> Could they then approach the Bengal Government directly? Metcalf, the Vice-President of the Calcutta Council, thought that they could have done so by petition. He believed that they did not do that simply because they wanted to overthrow the British Government and to establish their independence. (They vaguely talked of marching to Calcutta!) "I have no doubt however much they may have miscalculated," said Metcalfe, "that they did intend to expel the British

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(1) Dalton, Ethnology, 170.

(2) Ibid. 170.



Government from their own country and establish their own independence in imitation of their brethren, the Singhbhoom Coles, who are as free and independent as any people on earth, acknowledging no Government but that of their own village chiefs, for the most part paying revenue to no one, and scarcely acknowledging any allegiance to their nominal Raja," though Roughsedge had once "said and fondly imagined" "that the territory of Singhbhoom" was annexed to the British Empire."<sup>(1)</sup> Metcalfe further lamented that "the seeds of Insurrection exist everywhere under our Government, and more or less in all parts of India under our supremacy. This<sup>v</sup> partly owing to the readiness of the people to embrace the prospect of any change and partly to the antipathy against us as foreigners and conquerors, which I consider to be universal among all classes, although, according to circumstances, it is felt more bitterly and more actively by some than by others."<sup>(2)</sup>

It is true that these tribesmen wanted to end all encroachments upon their own system, but whether they thought in such large terms as the freedom of the whole area, it is difficult to say. Blunt rightly pointed out that people, who hardly knew any authorities beyond the native and European

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(1) Metcalfe. Minute 14 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Ibid.



functionaries of the district, could scarcely have planned the subversion of the British power <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ India. (1) The fact was that they could not find a simpler - or more effective - method of airing their grievances than a rebellion.

Certainly they never dreamed of sending a petition to the Vice-President of the Calcutta Government. Blunt sensibly asked, "Even supposing that any of their Sirdars through whom they would naturally seek redress, were capable of representing their grievances in that form or were aware of the facility afforded by the Honorable the Vice President to all persons aggrieved, to prefer to him in person their complaints," What villager would have thought to send a petition through the dak or would have ventured in person to Patna or Calcutta? (2)

- (1) Blunt, Minute 27 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227, J. Master, the officiating commissioner of circuit, who tried the Chota-Nagpur cases in the sessions, remarked similarly, "They [the Kols in search of employment] visit the Presidency, and all the principal towns in Bengal where opportunities occur of witnessing the prodigious extent (to their simple minds) of British enterprise, resources and power. The possibility of such a Government being subverted by their feeble and insignificant efforts could never therefore enter their contemplation and their views must have been confined to the expulsion <sup>of those</sup> by whom they considered themselves supplanted and aggrieved." Master to Govt., 17 Jan. 1833, Para. 24, B.C.1502/58833. Also in Bentinck M.S. Box 45
- (2) Blunt, Minute 27 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.



Metcalf's emphasis on the 'spirit of revolt' and 'the spirit of independence' among these tribal people may be partially correct in view of their long tradition of unrest in Tamar, Bundu and other dependencies of Chota-Nagpur, but it is noteworthy that the Dhangar Kols of North and Central Chota - Nagpur proper had never revolted before. His belief that the Kols thought, on the basis of reports about the reduction of troops at Hazaribagh and of the exaggerated accounts of the Muslim revolt at Baraset near Calcutta that it was the best opportunity of throwing off the British yoke,<sup>(1)</sup> is not confirmed by any statement of the prisoners. Metcalf's idea of a general Kol feeling of disaffection against the British - a feeling "composed partly of natural antipathy for a race so different in every respect from the native population and partly of disgust for foreign conquerors"<sup>(2)</sup> does not seem to be based on facts either, for the Kols revolved against all outsiders [seeds] - the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh landlords, moneylenders and subordinate servants of the maharaja as well as the agents of the Government. Blunt firmly stated that it had not come to his knowledge "that the Coles of Chola Nagpur or its dependencies have at any period antecedent to this insurrection meditated their independence."<sup>(3)</sup> Metcalf's use of the absence of any

(1) Metcalf, Minute, 14 Apl. 1832: The Muslims of Baraset had revolted in 1831 under one Titu Mir.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Blunt, Minute, 27 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227



previous wrong as a proof of conspiracy to rebel was also rather ludicrous - and Blunt effectively countered it by a reference to the Cuttack revolt of 1817 which, though occasioned by a long systematic oppression and misrule, had not been preceded by any complaints.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is possible that the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur had been thinking of throwing off a control which had been growing lighter ever since 1819 when his police powers were taken away. Before that he had been virtually independent, and so late as 1810 the Acting Magistrate of Ramgarh had admitted that the pretensions of this zamindar to be a <sup>tribe</sup> ~~dile~~ntary chief had never been contradicted by the British Government.<sup>(2)</sup> Similarly in 1811 the introduction of the revenue regulations had not been deemed advisable and the collector was peremptorily prohibited from interfering in the affairs of Chota Nagpur."<sup>(3)</sup>

In 1819, however, though the maharaja was still nominally required to select and dismiss the police officers of Chota Nagpur, and was responsible for their payment, he ceased to be the head of the police of the estate, and real

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- (1) Ibid. Blunt's remarks were more practical because he had the personal experience of this area.  
 (2) Ramgarh, Acting Magistrate to Government, 15 Jan. 1810. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 2 Feb. 1810. (130/12)  
 (3) Cuthbert to Government, 17 July 1824, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 36 of 26 Aug. 1824 (139/31).



power passed into the hands of the mir/daroga or native police superintendent. The heavy blows, however, only fell after N. Smith was appointed. Smith's first measure, of February 1822, was "to forbid his collecting sayer and to publish a proclamation forbidding any person to pay it to the Rajah, although proof was offered that it had always been collected, and that even decrees of our adawlut had been passed in favour of the Rajah's right to collect it."<sup>(1)</sup> The maharaja protested against this injustice on the ground that the sayer duties had been included in the assets of the Decennial Settlement of 1789, and therefore to prohibit this was to annul that settlement which had been declared permanent.<sup>(2)</sup> At the same time he claimed an exemption from the general regulations as they had not been formally extended to his estate. The Government, however, rejected

- (1) Sutherland to Government, N.D., 1363/54227. Cuthbert, the magistrate, submitted a dozen documents to show that the maharaja's right to collect the sayer had been recognised by all the district authorities in the past and that "on every principle of law, justice, and good faith," he was at least entitled to a reasonable compensation: Cuthbert to Government, 17 July 1824, Beng. Cr. Just.
- Cons. 36 of 26  
Aug. 1824 (1363/54227)  
(1) Cuthbert at times showed a good understanding of the local matters - perhaps it was his opposition to some Government measures that made Blunt and even the Directors ready to abuse him in 1832.
- (2) Petition, Agents of Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, Enclosure, Sutherland to Govt, n.d., BL.1363/54227. Also enclosure, Board to Government, 2 Sept. 1823, Beng. Rev. Cons. 42 of 2 Jan. 1824 (59/61).



these claims.<sup>(1)</sup> His objection to the introduction of the abkari duties (especially hawria dax) on the ground that it meant "twice taxing the rice or produce of the land."<sup>(2)</sup> was similarly overruled. According to his own statement, besides his loss of Rs.11,000 on account of sayer (with corresponding gain of Rs.12,000 to the Government and of Rs.25,000 to the thikadar on account of excise) he was still forced to pay Rs.7,006 towards the expenses of police establishments, the revenue of Rs.4,000 of Tamar and Rahi had been assigned to Thakurain Pancham Kunwari of Pachet (whose claim was to not more than Rs.2,400 annually) and he was also forced to pay an allowance of Rs.1,400 to the Rani of Tori.<sup>(3)</sup>

While he was forced to meet these demands, his financial difficulties went unnoticed by the authorities and in 1825, when he fell into arrears, his amla was called to the sadr station, his elephants, horses, etc. were seized and he was reduced to great distress. No wonder that while tendering his resignation as police zamindar, he emphasised his "utter ruin" and "unhappy situation".<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) Government to Board, 2 Jan.1824, Ibid.

(2) Petition, Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, n.d., Beng.Rev.Cons.38 of 19 Jan. 1826 (60/51).

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid. In 1824 the maharaja had shown "his utter inability to discharge arrears" of police expenses and had requested to be allowed to liquidate them in ten years by annual instalments; Shakespear, Memorandum, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons. 31 of 26 Jan.1826 (137/39).



In January 1826 the Government accepted the resignation of the maharaja, and a purely regular police under the magistrate was established. (1) But a still more severe blow was given to the maharaja's prestige when in 1830 Cuthbert vested his subordinate rajas with police powers, but kept the maharaja's case under consideration. (2) The maharaja "objected to the arrangement by which the several subordinate Jaghirdar... <sup>were</sup> vested with police powers independent of his authority and control and he deputed his Moktear to Calcutta to petition Government against that arrangement, claiming to be vested exclusively with the charge of the police throughout Chuta Naypoor and its dependencies as in the time of his father." (3) Still Cuthbert in July 1831, shortly before the outbreak of the <sup>u</sup>renewed, advised the Patila commissioner that the question of the maharaja being vested with these powers, even in his own area, should be "postponed until time shall have been allowed to ascertain the fitness or otherwise of the zemindary system of police in those parts [dependent parganas] in which it has been already introduced," and

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- (1) Resolution, Govt. 26 Jan. 1826, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons.32 of 26 Jan.1826 (137/33).  
 (2) Cuthbert to Lambert, 5 July 1831, B.C.1503/58895  
 (3) Blunt, Minute, 28 Jan.1832, Para.9, B.C.1363/54227.



until he had proved his ability to defray the expenses of the thanas punctually.<sup>(1)</sup> Blunt criticised this action of Cuthbert, on the ground that even in the Jungle Mahals the expenses of the thana establishments had not been charged to the zamindar.<sup>(2)</sup> Major Sutherland, on the basis of his long discussion with the maharaja during the unrest, commented that the recent measures of the authorities "are doubtless all most offensive to the Rajah, and would, but for the utter hopelessness of success, have naturally led to an open hostility on his part towards us."<sup>(3)</sup>

The interference of the British authorities had affected the power and prestige of the maharaja in several other ways. In 1827, for instance, he had been prohibited from assuming the power of conferring titles upon his subordinate jagidars.<sup>(4)</sup> His subordinate rajas had now realized that so long as they paid the revenues, the maharaja could do them no harm. Moreover, in his several petitions in 1832, the maharaja asse<sup>st</sup>ed that he was entitled to money payments and services (clan and karn) from the <sup>mu</sup>imendas, the mankis and all other landholders, but

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(1) Cuthbert to Lambert, 5 July 1831, B.C.1503/58895.

(2) Blunt, Minute, 28 Jan.1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(3) Sutherland to Govt., n.d. Ibid.

(4) Govt. to Cuthbert, 14 June 1827, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons.57 of 14 June 1827 (138/22).



that they had now stopped these payments and thought themselves masters. <sup>(1)</sup> Indeed, since the introduction of the regulations, the maharaja had lost the power of escheating an estate on the failure to fulfil the services. Moreover, he had lately been prohibited from realizing a contribution (madad) from them every third year. Not only that, the panchpownia, or tax on certain castes and trades (e.g. oilmen, washermen, barbers, weavers, shoemakers, etc.) varying from four to twelve annas per house and a levy of special contributions on occasions of rejoicing or mourning - all these had been prohibited by Cuthbert in 1827.

It may well be surmised that the maharaja would have welcomed an end to British control and to their undue interference in his affairs. But whether he directly instigated the tribal people to revolt has not been conclusively proved. In his statements he totally denied his association with the rebels. When told by Major Sutherland that he was suspected of having to some degree instigated the insurrection, he pointed out the loss of his property and of his kinsmen, and asked the Major, "Would any one believe that you would set fire to this and this and this." (pointing to his bed, table and chair)? <sup>(2)</sup> But

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(1) C.F. Petition, Maharaja Jagann<sup>th</sup> Sahi, 22 March 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C.1363/54227.



But Dent, one of the joint commissioners, in his separate remarks, Russell, the Jungle Mahals magistrate, who apprehended some of the rebel leaders of Chota-Nagpur in Patkum, and Blunt, who had a past experience of this area, honestly felt that the maharaja was at the bottom of the insurrection. Dent thought that there were the strongest grounds for believing that the Nagvansis "were at the bottom of it and that the Raja's name was made use of."<sup>(1)</sup> The maharaja and his Nagvansi kinsmen were very hard pressed at that time and to get out of their financial difficulties, they wanted to increase the rents of the farmers (non-tribal settlers to whom they had recently granted lands) or to eject them forcibly. But since they could not easily do either, in the face of the authority of the civil and criminal courts, and of the police, they wanted to set this authority at naught. The instrument for doing this was found in the discontented and ousted tribesmen.<sup>(2)</sup> Both Russell and Dent gave weight to this fact because they were convinced of Singrai's straightforwardness. Moreover, this was corroborated by other evidence. For example, Sahib Singh, a subadar of the Ramgarh

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- (1) Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C. 1502/58891;  
 (2) Statement, Singrai, in Patkum, Enclosure, Russell to Braddon, 18 Apr. 1832, B.C. 1363/54226. He even alleged that the maharaja had "ordered them to expel all the natives, the Hindu thanees and the Mahajun Theecada's out of their territories, and to bring their riches, money, jewels and plates to him, that he may pay his Malgoozarfe (Government rent) out of them saying "Let their paddy, rice and other eatable things be pillaged by the hungry and the poor."



battalion, who, with a party, was at Palkote, the maharaja's residence, during the later part of the unrest, stated it to be his belief that the Nagvansi chiefs had investigated the tribesmen. Captain Wilkinson, one of the joint commissioners, dismissed this evidence on the ground that the Subadar could not fully corroborate his statement. But Dent, the other joint commissioner, in his separate remarks, described the subadar as a dependable character and lent support to his contention. (1)

Against such a belief could be set, however, the known ill-feeling between the maharaja and his relations, (2) and his under tenure holders. It was the subordinate jagidars who could assemble the paiks, but they were dissatisfied by the maharaja's rack-renting. When even the rautias were at odds with him, could the maharaja have issued orders to them to create disturbances?

Several statements tending to implicate the kunwars of Basia and Gavindfour as the planners of the insurrection were received by the joint commissioners. One was that of Sibnath Tiwari, a Brahman holding several villages in mukarrari tenure. (3) He alleged that the kunwar of Basia and

(1) Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C. 1502/58891.

(2) Sutherland to Government, n.d., B.C. 1363/54227.

(3) Petition, Sibnath, 7 May 1832, Encloma, Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, B.C. 1502/58891.



Govindpur, the uncle and cousin respectively of the maharaj<sup>a</sup>, had complained to the zamindar of Chhatna, a relation of the Packet raja, that they had lost their independence since the commencement of the Company's rule and that many estates were now auctioned through the decree of the courts. The Chhatna chief, who had married into the family of the Nagvansi zaminders, advised them to emulate the example of the Packet raja (who had successfully defied the British authority in 1797-98), to defy the Government with the help of the tribesman and to take possession of the jagir of those who would be killed. The kunwars, it was further alleged, persuaded Loher Singh, a rautia, and all the <sup>mul</sup> muendas or malitos and bahans to rise in arms, and one Gopi Pandey, who knew these facts and who wanted to inform the commissioner, was murdered. (1)

Wilkinson, after his investigation, thought that the accusation was false, though the marriage alliance with Packet and Chhatna and the death of Gopi in suspicious circumstances, were true enough. Dent, however, gave more weight to Tiwari's statement than Wilkinson had done. (2) He pointed out that not one of the Nagvansis had come forward to assist the authorities in checking the insurrection till

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Dent. Separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58891.



sufficient troops had arrived, and the failure of the insurrection had become apparent. Moreover the villages in which these chiefs resided, and their houses and property were invariably respected. Even the flight of the kunwar to Doesa might have been a blind. Dent also cited the case of Rahamalli Khan who had been trading in Chota-Nagpur for the last 35 years and who had purchased two villages in the Sonapur pargana. His property had been plundered at the clear instigation of the kunwar of Basia and of Lohar Singh Rautia. (1)

Wilkinson admitted that there were "some Circumstances in the conduct of the Raja of Nagpoor and the Kuar of Basia which give the story [of Tiwari] an appearance of truth. In several instances, in which Elaquadars and thiccadas were killed in the insurrection, their villages have been taken possession of by the Kuar and Raja on the plea of there being no direct male heir. (2), But since the man who made these allegations was known to be on inimical terms with the Basia family and since he admitted subsequently that certain parts of this statement were pure conjecture, Wilkinson refused to give any credence to it. Moreover, he thought that the

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Jt. Commissioner to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para.82, B.C. 1502/58891.



mankis and rautias, whom the kunwar had reduced to poverty and beggary, would not have acted as his instrument<sup>(1)</sup>.

It may, however, be pointed out that though the Nagvansis were instrumental in ruining the tribesmen, the tribal wrath was directed against the non-tribal people who had directly harassed them. So when they were instigated by the kunwar and other chiefs, they were only too glad.

Sahib Singh subadar stated that in his presence one day at Balkote the maharaja had accused the Kunwar of Basia and Lohar Singh of being the originators of the insurrection. The maharaja insisted in the joint commissioner's presence that Lohar Singh Rautia alone was the chief instigator of rebellion. Was this merely a second thought, designed to shield his kinsman?

Another statement dismissed by the joint commissioners was that of a brother of the diwan of Rahi who said that "the kols of Tamar and Bundu had received sunnuds from the Maharaja ... desiring them to burn, plunder, and expel the foreigners."<sup>(2)</sup> His statement was discounted because it was based on hearsay and no confirmatory evidence could be found in the pargana. Similarly they rejected the allegation of a Brahman of Basia named Solira Migra who said that Lohar

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 86, B.C. 1502/58891



Singh Rautia and Kamal Singh Rautia had planned and instigated the insurrection for the purpose of getting rid of the thanas and gentlemen (Englishmen), and of the Suds (foreigners). This was dismissed because the man was not considered a good character and he could not adduce proof.<sup>(1)</sup> Such proof was, however, unlikely to be forthcoming in view of the wide influence of the Nagvansi chiefs. (After all no one had come forward in 1818-1819 to give evidence of the maharaja's complicity in the murder of a witch).

Yet, as Russell, the Jungle Mahals magistrate pointed out, "if the insurgents were not urged on and supported by some such influential individuals, it is difficult to account for the insurrection (becoming) so extensive and simultaneous."<sup>(2)</sup> He had learnt that for a long time before joining the joint commissioners' camp, the maharaja had retired to the hills in concealment in order to avert suspicion from himself as party to the rebellion. He had also heard that the maharaja was displeased with the new system of police and that he was annoyed with Cuthbert for having invested his subordinates/ zamindars with police powers. Russell was therefore convinced that the maharaja was the chief instigator

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(1) Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 87, B.C. 1502/58891

(2) Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para. 23, B.C. 1363/54226



of the rebellion.

J. <sup>st</sup>Ma<sub>1</sub>der, who succeeded Lambert as the commissioner of the Patla division, also thought that the rajas had excited the insurrection. He, however, held that the maharaja himself was poor, passive and powerless. It was designing persons among his connections and dependents who had misled the tribesmen who were later to await capital punishment. In support of his view that the Nagvanhi chiefs were at the root of the turmoil, he wrote, "Heavy pecuniary demands existed against them in favour of the foreign settlers and the expulsion of the latter promised to remove from the debtors a burden of endless embarrassment. Whilst the country was in flames too, the lives and property of most of the Raja's relations were scrupulously preserved from mischief and molestation, a circumstance which argues tacit participation or most culpable supineness in neglecting the adoption of effective measures for crushing the rebellion in its infancy."<sup>(1)</sup>

It may, therefore, be surmised, in spite of the lack of any direct proof, that the maharaja and the lesser rajas, irritated with the British authorities and goaded by their financial difficulties, instigated the tribesmen to revolt. In the words of Blunt, the maharaja "may have considered the summary expulsion of the Mahajuns and the destruction of their houses, papers, and effects, the most convenient way of

(1) Master to Govt., 17 Jan. 1833, Para 16, B.C.1502/58833.  
Also Bentinck M.S., Box 15.



squaring all accounts with them, to many of whom he is understood to be much indebted and as to the loss of revenue, it is the loss only of one year, and he has no doubt calculated on a remission of the public demand very possibly for some years to come." (1)

But it should be borne in mind that the Nagvansi chiefs could not of themselves have caused an insurrection without some heavy grievances among the tribesmen. It is time now to turn to a rather more detailed analysis of what those grievances were, for so far attention has been directed rather to the attitude of the British, of their agents and of the chiefs than to the people themselves. Professor Haimendorf has said, of the causes of tribal rebellions, "in Chota Nagpur it was land in Rajshahi sex - yet in both cases violations of a tribal system led to a similar conflict with 'law and order'." (2) Though land was certainly not the only issue in chota-Nagpur it was of primary importance, and land therefore will be the first issue considered.

In the years preceding the outbreak of 1831 many ryots had been dispossessed of land. The plainsmen who had poured into Chota-Nagpur - as traders, craftsmen, priests, or officials- and the relatives of the chiefs, had been given

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(1) Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl. 1832, Para.34, B.C.1363/54227.

(2) 'Aboriginal Rebellions', Man in India, Rebellion Number XXV, No.4, Dec. 1945.



land which was really tribal property, and "the landed rights of the aboriginals with which their village system [was] closely bound up<sup>(A)</sup> suffered. The total land thus alienated included 4,288 $\frac{1}{2}$  villages in Chota-Nagpur proper (i.e. owned by the maharaja), 393 in Sonapur pargana, 321 in Basia, 253 in Jashpur, 1156 in Khukhra and so on.<sup>(1)</sup>

Most of the grantees, other than the relations of the ruling families, were outsiders, whether priests, officials or traders. All alike sought, whenever possible, to dispossess the tribal landowners within the villages. Blunt commented, "I am decidedly of opinion that the insurrection originated in the dispossession of the Mankees and Moondas of Sonapur and the adjacent Pergunnahs from their hereditary lands."<sup>(2)</sup> He admitted that in a more 'civilized' part of the country such a transfer of possession was a normal feature, but in such jungly estates with so little civilized a people, "the experiment of transferring such lands to farmers and foreigners is highly dangerous, and wherever it has been attempted, it has invariably been productive of the same injurious consequences to the peace of the country."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(A) *Modern India and the West*, 730

(1) Appendix I, J.A. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C. 1502/58891

(2) Blunt, Minute, 27 Apr. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(3) Ibid. With this view the joint commissioners actively agreed. "we attribute to a desire of recovering those estates and villages [of which the Blueinhahs had been dispossessed] the commencement of the late disturbances." Jt. Comm. Mission to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 27, B.C. 1502/58891. (11)



Davidson in 1839, on the basis of his intimate knowledge of the area, definitely stated that "the disturbances in Nagpoor in 1832 were caused by no one cause so much as the dispossession of the Moondas and Mankies who are the Bhooneas [Bhuinhās] of Sonepoor of their lands..."<sup>(1)</sup>

In Sonapur pargana, all the mankis (one of them for three years back and the rest for about seven years) had been deprived by 1832 of their hereditary estates by Haxnath Shhi, the Kunwar of Govindpur, who had farmed them to thikadas.<sup>(2)</sup> The most glaring case was that of Singrai Manki who was deprived of his twelve villages. "These Teekadas had rendered themselves obnoxious not only to the Mankies but to the cultivators. They would not permit the former to have even the fruits of trees which [they] themselves and their forefathers had planted, and having only a temporary interest in the land they naturally raised from it the highest possible rents."<sup>(3)</sup> In the words of Singrai, "they have taken away from us our trees, fishes, lands and jagirs. They lend us 1 Rupee, but take three from us."<sup>(4)</sup> Thus the real "germ of discontent may unquestionably be traced to the arbitrary resumption of lands by members of the ruling family from certain Mankies in Sonapore who conceived that their rights were established by hereditary tenures, and to the

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- (1) Davidson to Duseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 19, Misc. Despatches Book, No. 247 G.G.'s Agent's Office, Patna Archives.
- (2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 111, B.C. 1502/58891. Also statements of Sagar Mani (B.C. 1363/54227) and of Singrai (B.C. 1363/54226)
- (4) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 73, B.C. 1502/58891.
- (5) Statement of Singrai, B.C. 1363/54226.



introduction of aliens in the capacity of Theekada<sup>r</sup>s to the exclusion of the parties thus harshly and precipitately dispossessed." (1)

The foreigners, who thus secured the revenue-farms, were not satisfied with the customary share of the produce from the cultivators, and they having attacked "the most vulnerable points " of the village system, came to enjoy an absolute right to the village, introduced the "foreign idea of rent" and the 'Rajhas' and the Manjhihas' tenures thus originated. (2) Naturally enough, the tribal people who were unusually conscious of their inherent right in the land (3) developed a hatred towards these foreign intruders. Their "blood boiled with indignation" at the sight of these foreigners "whom the Maharaja had let loose over the country and who sought to reduce them from their possession of village proprietors to an inferior status. And their fierce hatred of these aliens, the Mundas expressed in indignant songs ... in which the unwelcome strangers are compared to the greedy vulture, the ravenous crow, the upstart peacock, and the ominous owl." (4)

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(1) J. Master to Govt. 17 Jan. 1833, Para. 8, B.C. 1502/58893. Also Bentinck. M.S., Box 15.

(2) Rakhal Das Haldar's Report, Supplement to Calcutta Gazette 1 Dec. 1880. In 1839 Davidson explained Manjhihas as "ground allotted to the landlord or his theekadar" and Rajhas as "the land paying rent to the owner or his representative." But later on the thikadar began to cultivate the latter category of land. Davidson to Ouseley, 29 Aug. 1839, Para. 13, Misc. Dispatch Book, No. 247, G.G.'s

(3) & (4) See over.   
 Agents Office, Patna Archives.



- (3) According to an anonymous writer of "kols of Chota Nagpore" Calcutta Review, XLIX' 124, they adhered to the Hindu law-giver Manu's principle, "The cultivated land is the property of him who cut away the wood, or who cleared and tilled it." Moreover, "like Russian peasants, (they) are wide awake to their right to the land": Ibid. 112.
- (4) Roy, Mundas, 168-169: The English translation of one such song:

Look where thou wilt, dear, wherever eye grazes,  
 Upto the sky or below to the earth,  
 (Men of mean blood wilt thou meet in high places),  
 Owls pose as lords, dear, the owls of low birth.  
 Look how the crow rules as diguar (village watchman)  
 each village

Peacocks are grown great beings on earth  
 Rules the vile crow now as Kotwar all over,  
 Now hath each village for Digwar a crow.  
 Mundas of hamlets now tremble and shiver,  
 They that were owners of hamlets ere now.  
 Phuinhas all over now quake and quiver,  
 Terror supreme now doth reign the land over,  
 Mundas of hamlets have lost their old cheer.



The influx of these hated outsiders gave rise to the system of sub-letting two or three villages to small farmers or thikadars - a practice which eventually crushed out all indigenous village organisation; the thikadar was usually a Muslim and the "kols bore that sort of hatred to him which the Irishman bears to the interloper who gets possession of his hut and croft."<sup>(1)</sup> The Hindus were mostly traders and moneylenders, hated for their enormous profit and usurious interests: "The mahajens who advanced money and grain managed within a twelve month to get from them 70 per cent and sometimes more."<sup>(2)</sup> According to a newspaper report, the mahajen often wrote in an option to take either money or grain in the harvest season and "if he takes money, being the only purchaser, the first buys the grain at his own price and thus gets his money back either way."<sup>(3)</sup> Another correspondent wrote of these mahajans, shroffs and others, who had come from Patna, Gaya and Sherghati, that they captured the trade of this area and "by means of loans, exorbitant interest, etc. even the land and villages eventually became theirs." and the tribesmen were reduced to mere serfs.<sup>(4)</sup> When the tribesmen had thus become

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(1) Sutherland to Govt. n.d., B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para.75, B.C. 1502/5889.

(3) 'Old Grundy', 6 March 1832, India Gazette, 16 March 1832. An interest of 75 p.c. per annum was charged, though the interest permissible by law was only 12 p.c.

(4) A letter in India Gazette, 19 March 1832.



deeply involved in debt to the plainsmen and they had been pressed hard for payment, many of them "had executed "Sewukpattas", that is, had sold their services till the debt was discharged, which was in fact binding themselves to give their whole earnings to their creditor receiving from him food and clothing, or [to] work for him exclusively, thus becoming his bondsmen for life."<sup>(1)</sup> Little wonder that some contemporary newspapers described this rising as a helots' war against the masters.<sup>(2)</sup> Even the joint commissioners who in 1832 tried to argue that though the tribesmen did not resent the exorbitant rate of interest (75 to 100 p.c.) as oppressive, agreed that it could not "but have been severely felt by them."<sup>(3)</sup>

Yet another grievance of the tribal people was the manipulation of the currency. With the introduction of a money economy, for the payment of revenue, they were exposed to numerous frauds by moneychangers and revenue officials. They complained to the Joint Commissioners "against the zemindas and jagheerdar for having within the last few years increased their land rent, by collecting malgoozarrie in

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(1) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, para. 75, B.C. 1502/58891

(2) 'Jassos', 4 March, Bengal Hurkarn, 14 March 1832.

(3) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 5 Apl. 1832, Para. 24, B.C. 1363/54227



Sicca which was formerly paid in Sonat Ruprees."<sup>(1)</sup> The change also involved an actual increase of 35 p.c. in the land revenue burden. Dent, in his separate remarks, noted, "the fluctuations in the copper currency have been complained of by the Coles, the coin is a mis-shapen piece of copper, without any impression, (averaging about 4 Drums 1 <sup>2</sup>scrup<sup>l</sup> athopercaries weight) stated to have been originally manufactured at Mirzapore by a Dunes of the name of Muddoo <sup>hee</sup> Salica. It is not current in the adjacent districts."<sup>(2)</sup>

The thikadas and officials also misused their power in ways even more personally wounding. There were numerous accounts of women being seduced or carried off by the Muslim and Sikh thikadars. Bindrai, the manki of Katea, in Bandgaon admitted frankly that he became desperate because Jamadar Khudabaksha and the Barkandazes, Jagarnath and Musan "took away one of my women to Bandgaon and at night took her 'Hoormut' (honour)", and that he could not find her in the jungles. He confessed that this was why he killed Jafar Ali,

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- (1) Ibid. Para 19: The evil was "felt more sorely from the depreciation of the copper coin. 13 Tucka or 26 pukka pice were formerly equal to a sonat Rupee and received in payment of rent as such. The present value of the sicca Rupee is 20 Tuckas; the rents being collected in copper."
- (2) Dent, Separate remarks. 5 Jan. 1833. B.C.1502/58891



the thikadar of Bandgaon, plundered and burnt his house, and thus began the disturbance. (1) Earlier he had told Bahadur Dubhasia (Interpreter), who had been sent by the authorities to get in touch with him, that two of his wives had been carried off by the Munshi and his Muslim peons who had ravished the younger one and ill-treated her in bestial fashion. Moreover the Singh (the Sixth thikadar) of Surgaon had taken away two of his <sup>sister</sup> ~~sisters~~ by force and retained them at his place. (2)

One may wonder, as Metcalfe did, why these aggrieved people did not seek redress in the court of law or from the police thanas. But these departments were, as has been already noted, honeycombed with abuses, and the poor tribesmen had no hope of justice there. Wia Ram, the Nazir of the Ramgarh court, surpassed all others in oppression and extortion. (3)

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- (1) Statement, Bindrai, 19 Apl 1832, B.C.1363/54227.  
 (2) Statement, Bindrai, Bahadur, Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Government, 12 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227. Baijnath Manki stated before the Ramgarh magistrate and the Patna commissioner that some Sikhs "took from Sing Rae Manki his daughters and kept them in their houses." According to a newspaper report, on the other hand, his sisters and wives were taken away and one of the wives was treated "with unheard of and unparalleled barbarity." 'P', Bengal, Hurkaru, 15 Feb. 1832.  
 (3) 'Jassos', Bengal Hurkaru, 14 March 1832. He was mainly instrumental (in a negative way) in producing the rising, and still he was allowed to continue in office: "Jassos," Bengal Hurkaru, 30 Apl. 1832.



The police officers were similarly famous for their extortions. Blunt admitted in 1832, "the most grievous oppressions and exactions have been practised by the native officers of Government, especially the police Darogahs, which alone, amidst a people so poor, might well account for any general feeling of discontent."<sup>(1)</sup>

A few examples will show "the hopelessness of the aboriginal population over obtaining any redress from the local potentates who were then in practical possession of the country."<sup>(2)</sup> Sui, the munda of Echagutu stated to Bahadur Dubhasia: "I gave a tola of gold to Luttie Cole of Koomang of Sonapore; in exchange for which he agreed to give me a fair of buffaloes during three years. I applied to him several times for them in vain, for which reason I carried off a pair of his buffaloes. For this I was considered a thief by Mohammad Ally Naik of Koomag, who took from me the buffaloes, and tied and took me to his house. The next day he suspended me from a tree by a rope tied to my hair, <sup>and</sup> subsequently cut me down, when by the fall one of my toes of my left foot was broken. I was kept in the stocks five days suffering great torture, and only obtained my release on giving a bullock and a buffalo. I immediately went and complained of the treatment I had received to the

(1) Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl.1832, Para.12, B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Reid, Ranchi Settlement Report, Para. 48.



Poorahauth (Porahat in Singhbhum) Raj ah, and wished to be informed by him how I was to recover my gold, and what redress I should have for Mahommed Ally's conduct towards me, who had taken Luttie's (part), as he belonged to his village. The Raja said he could not send for either Mahommed Ally or Luttie, but that his Moonshee and Jamadar of the Chucker~~cher~~-~~pore~~ Thanna, when they went to Bandgaon, would investigate and settle my business. The Moonshee and Jamadar came to Bandgaon in the month of Bhadow 1238 Fussilly, and I went to them. In place of paying attention to my petition they fined me five rupees. I was satisfied the Moonshee was taking his friend's part, and that my grievances would not be redressed."<sup>(1)</sup> Though Sui, when cross-examined after his arrest in April 1832, gave rather a different statement,<sup>(2)</sup> the tenor of both the statements was the same, revealing a helplessness and desperation which inevitably led to violent action.

The second statement was by Bindrai Hanki, another leader of the insurrection. He stated to Bahadur, the interpreter, thus, "I borrowed a pair of old buffaloes from Burju Bania of the Sonapur ~~p~~argana. This man came to my house accompanied by 60 men and took from me six cows and calves, and four buffaloes, seized both my brother, Singhrail

(1) Statement, Sui Munda, Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 12 Feb. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Statement Sui, 19 Apl. 1832, Ibid. The difference was only in details regarding beating etc. by Mohammad Ali. He also stated before Wilkinson that he did not complain to the higher authorities <sup>but</sup> of fear.



and myself, and took us to his house. We succeeded in effecting our escape, but my cattle was not released. I complained to Koomkera Singh, Raja of Bandgaon (in Singhbhum), of the Bania's treatment of us. He listened to me and gave me 35 men for my protection with whom I went to <sup>ur</sup>Swagaon, where not finding the Bania, we seized two men and a pair of bullocks which we took to the Raja. For this an inhabitant of <sup>ur</sup>Swagaon, named Singh (a sixth thikadar), preferred a complaint against us at Sherghati. My brother Singhrai and self and Bahadur were seized by the Chakradharpur Munshi and Jamadar who came to Bandgaon for the purpose. I requested them to send us to Sherghati, if our seizure were in consequence of orders from there. They replied that they would give <sup>us</sup> ~~me~~ answer on paying them 100 rupees. After remaining confined in the stocks for fifteen days and suffering great pain, we escaped..."<sup>(1)</sup> Bindrai further stated how his wives and sisters were ill-treated and how the Parahat raja's diwan told him, on being approached, that "we might do as we pleased, but be careful not to involve Raja Achet Singh in any difficulties by our conduct."<sup>(2)</sup>

These incidents not only reveal the inefficiency of the police of Chota-Nagpur and Singhbhum, but also the

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(1) Statement, Bindrai, Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 12 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(2) Ibid.



the helplessness of the Singhbhum raja, like his comp<sup>ee</sup>ar in Chota-Nagpur, before the manoeuvres of his divan and the turbulence of his tribal chieftains. Incidents like these put the spark to the fumes of discontent. Bindrai and Singrai, naturally enough, assembled their brethren of Singhbhum and Tamar, and resolved to do or die: "We returned home, invited all the kols our brethren and caste to assemble at the village Lankah in Tamar, where we had a consultation. The Pathans had taken our honour and the Singh our sisters and the Kuar, Haranath Sahi, had forcibly deprived us of our estates of twelve villages, which he had given to the singh. Our lives we considered of no value, and being of one caste and brethren, it was agreed upon that we should commence to cut, plunder, murder and eat. We said, if any were hanged it would be us four; if any put in irons, we should be the four. We four should be answerable, and if the gentleman sent for any, it would be us who were ready to attend and submit to whatever might be the sentence. It is with this resolution that we have been murdering and plundering those who have deprived us of both honour and homes, conceiving that [by] committing such outrages our grievances would come to light, and that if we had any master, notice would be taken of them and justice rendered."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Statement, Bindrai, Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 12 Feb. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.



The complaints of oppression preferred against the thana establishments, particularly in the remote parts of Chota-Nagpur, were "very loud" and "considerable sums are stated to have been taken by the Darogha, and Jemadar, as Sullarnee and in bribes from all classes."<sup>(1)</sup> If many people who had paid bribes, were reluctant "to come forward with their complaints from an apprehension that proving their correctness will be attended with much trouble and inconvenience,"<sup>(2)</sup> there must have been many cases like that of Layuram Kol of Chhattarkol. He stated that "in the month of Bhadow last one of his Dangas [Phangar Kols], returning from work went to a tank, fell into it and was drowned. The circumstance was reported at the Thanna of Jeekoochuttie (Jhikochatti) in consequence of which there came a Bukundaze to examine the corpse, etc."- accompanied by 10 to 15 Kotwars (Kotwals) - and remained eight days in the village.<sup>(3)</sup> They consumed 150 seers of Usna (coarse) rice, 75 seers of Arwa (fine) rice, ghee, worth two rupees, and salt worth one rupee. Besides, the sepoy realized Rs.26

(1) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 5 Apl. 1832, Para.18, Ibid.

(2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 78, B.C. 1502/58891.

(3) Ibid, Para. 79. The maharaja had opposed the introduction of village chaukidars (kotwals) because every village already had a gorait or village constable who was sufficient for village watch: Dent, separate remarks. 5 Jan.1833, B.C. 1502/58891.



annas 4 on the threat of sending the Kol to Sherghati for execution. (1)

Nor were abuses practised only upon individuals. The mahtos, pahans and ilagadars were required annually to register the names of the Kotwals and goraits of their villages in the thana. This registration was made on occasion by the darogas for the exaction of a fee of one rupee or more, according to the size of the village, as Kotwali or gorait likhai. (2)

Metcalf made light of these "excessive or undue or illegal exactions "made" by the Rajah and the Jageerdaas, and by our police and Revenue officers in chota Nagpoor," declaring them "hardly sufficient to cause such an insurrection as this, which has not been directed towards a redress of grievances, but to the utter annihilation of the Government, and extermination or expulsion of every inhabitant of the country, who came under the designation of Foreigner." (3) He later pointed out that "shameful as some of these exactions undoubtedly are, they are not so rare in India as to have been exclusively inflicted on the Coles." (4) What he failed to recognise was the strength of

(1) Ibid.

(2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 80, B.C. 1502/58891

(3) Metcalfe, Minute, 30 March 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(4) Metcalfe, Minute, 14 Apl. 1832, Ibid.



the Kol spirit of independence, and their tradition of tribal exclusiveness. The seven cuts inflicted on their victims by the Kols on account of seven obnoxious taxes suggest that the extortions and abuses were not unimportant to the insurgents. (The cuts were given one for each tax: for the batta on changing copper for silver, the excise tax on spirits, the proposed tax on opium, the fines for supposed or real crimes, the village salamis, the forced labour on the roads and the postal taxes on the villages)<sup>(1)</sup>. Most of these were new taxes.

The most galling of these was the tax on hanria or rice beer which, as the local authorities and even the Bengal Government admitted,<sup>(2)</sup> was almost a necessity of life with these tribal people. Cuthbert, by reviving this tax as a house-tax in 1830 had, in fact, infringed Regulation X of 1813 which provided only for duties on the manufacture and sale of spirituous liquors, and not on domestic brewing. Since no zamindar had imposed such a tax before, this was ascribed to British rule, which was thus made obnoxious. Accustomed as the tribesmen had been to

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(1) Sutherland to Govt. n.d. B.C.1363/54227. A similar instance of barbarity can be found in the santhal Insurrection of 1855-57: One Bin Dayal Ray's limbs were chopped off bit by bit with such remarks. "With these fingers you counted your interest and ill-gotten wealth! With this hand you snatched away food from the mouths of the hungry poor!" K.K. Datta, Santal Insurrection, 34.

(2) Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, B.C. 1362/54223.



use hanria "from their infancy, becoming through time almost necessary to their existence, it was hardly possible to expect that the Koles would make so great a sacrifice as almost wholly to resign the use of their favourite beverage." (1)

The Board of Customs, salt and opium had sanctioned (2) the levy of four annas on every house with a full knowledge of the oppressions perpetrated by the excise staff and farmers: "The inhabitants of Chota Nagpore.. are stated to be subjected under the present abkaree system of this pergunnah to various oppressions, such as being forced by the farmer to take out licences for the sale of liquor when they know nothing of the way of manufacturing it - of being afterwards compelled to pay the tax for the license so forced upon them, in advance for half the year at once, and of being further subjected to extortions on behalf of the farmers by their Peadas." (3) But since there was a possible increase of Government revenue to be had, the Board cheerfully swallowed Cuthbert's assertion that it would be a "popular tax." (4).

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- (1) Drummond, M.S. Statistical Account, Chapter VI.  
(No page no.)
  - (2) Cuthbert to Govt. n.d. Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 5 April. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.
  - (3) Board of Customs to Patna Commissioner. 18 June 1830, B.C. 1363/54229.
  - (4) A writer ('a looker on', Camp Chota Nappur, 18 March 1832) in the Bengal Burkaru, 30 March 1832, described Cuthbert as "another zealous servant of the rising star, who discovering these Coles to be sons of Bacchus and lovers of intoxicating juice, conceived it to be inconsistent/over





The reports of the joint commissioners revealed how useful an instrument of oppression the tax of four annas a house became in the hands of the tax collectors. The Peadas sent to count the houses, exacted bribes from the village heads, the latter instead of taking four annas or ten dabus (or large pia) took twelve, even sixteen dabus <sup>(1)</sup> Every village paid a cash salami to the tahsildar and peadas, often a goat as well. <sup>(2)</sup> As Sutherland put it, "All taxes of this nature are intolerable to the Coles to whom they are new, and who are not sufficiently civilized quietly to bear the infliction of new taxes." <sup>(3)</sup>

Cuthbert, when asked for his comments, replied that at the time of the excise settlement he had questioned hundreds of kols without finding one who complained of the tax. <sup>(4)</sup> Nor had the zamindars expressed any dissatisfaction with the plan. In the newspaper controversy over the causes of the outbreak there were some who defended Cuthbert, arguing that even if the tax gatherers had taken twelve annas instead of four that was not the cause of the outbreak,

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(1) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 5 Apl. 1832, para. 8, B.C. 1363/54227.

(2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 16 Nov. 1832, Para. 75. B.C.1502/58891

(3) Sutherland to Govt. n.d. B.C.1363/54227.

(4) Cuthbert to Govt., 29 March 1832, ibid



and that many prisoners had said they "did not know what they were fighting for."<sup>(1)</sup>

But the evidence suggests that though only one of several factors, the abkari tax was a major one. Of the village heads questioned by Major Blackall after the rising had been suppressed 29 referred to the great exactions of the collectors, who took 12 annas, or even a rupee where four annas alone were due,<sup>(2)</sup> and the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur also pointed to the tyranny and oppression of the abkari tahsildars as a cause of the popular discontent.<sup>(3)</sup> He had opposed the tax from the beginning pointing out that the poor labouring tribesmen had "neither the means of preparing nor purchasing liquor, but in the same way that they support life by eating rice, so that they mix that same rice with jungle productions and giving it the name of "Handea" therewith satisfy their wants. To collect promptly the four annas which has now been imposed on each house is difficult, and injury and oppression of the poor are the necessary results of the demanding it."<sup>(4)</sup> The Calcutta Courier certainly believed that here was a major grievance.

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(1) 'P' camp Pitoria, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 18 March 1832.

(2) Blackall to Cuthbert, 8 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

(3) Statement, Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, n.d. Ibid.

(4) Petition, Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, 6 Apl.1832, Enclosure, Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58891.



"It is now pretty well ascertained that the tax on houses substituted for the spirit tax, was the inciting cause of the insurrection... It is assessed, the tax was collected in a very oppressive way by the agency of Moosulmans and other foreign agents and that... these merciless extortioners levied a poll tax ad libitum." (1)

Besides this liquor box, another grievance of the Kols was the forced poppy - cultivation and, according to Sutherland, another cut was given to the victims body on this account. Though Cuthbert had introduced it as a valuable cash crop which would improve the condition of the peasants, "the thing was disagreeable to the Coles, who knew nothing of the manner of making it." (2) (Dent found the soil quite unfavourable for its cultivation and strongly recommended its discontinuance). It was made more disagreeable by the pressure which Cuthbert put upon the cultivators, despatching pariwanas to the zamindars, lagidars, and police officers to extend its cultivation. The Kola pleaded that the Officials "might take their Dhotees (loin-cloths) and pugrees (turbans) almost the only things they had to give, but that they would not

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(1) Calcutta Courier, 11 Apl. 1832, Editorial.

(2) Dent, Separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58891. The statement of opium produce in Chota Nagpur (Appendix, Joint Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C.1502/58891 shows that in 1828/29, 1829/30 and 1830/31 the average produce was about 1 Mds. 16 seers, 3 Mds, 31 seers and 4 Mds. respectively.



cultivate the poppy." (1) But the subordinate officials continued to press them, and even after Cuthbert had issued instructions that the amlas should not force those who did not produce opium. (2)

The contemporary newspaper reports confirm the view that this new opium policy was a cause, albeit a minor one, of the unrest, and that it was particularly disliked by the tribal people. (3) (one good reason may well have been that the Company paid only Rs. 3 annas 8 per seer for opium produced in this area). (4)

The joint commissioners corroborated the reports that opium production was disliked. In April 1832 they admitted that the thanadas had been in the habit of taking from almost every village within their jurisdiction "from one to two rupees for exempting the Coles." (5) They further admitted that it was quite uncertain whether Cuthbert's instructions not to use compulsion had been obeyed, and in November 1832 having found other classes as averse to poppy cultivation as the Kols, they "ordered it to be discontinued in [chota] Nagpore." (6)

(1) Sutherland to Govt. n.d. B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Ibid. Also see Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl. 1832, Ibid. One 'Ignoramus' (in Bengal Hurkaru, 25 Feb. 1832 argued that the Kols rejoiced in poppy cultivation, which was in no way true.

(3) cf. Report from Camp Banta Hajam, 16 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 23 March 1832. 'A looker on', Camp Chota Nagpur. 18 March 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 30 March 1832.

(4) Letter from Camp Bundu, 27 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 5 March 1832. According to 'Old Grundy' (6 March 1832, India Gazette, 16 March 1832 it was only 2 rupees per seer.

(5) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 5 Apl. 1832, Para. 20, B.C.1363/54227



A correspondent of the Bengal Hurkaru summed up the matter by saying "This obnoxious measure (liquor-tax), together with the compulsory means adopted for the cultivation of opium, has driven the Coles to the desperate resolution of taking justice into their own hands, and now they are making the country smoke for it."<sup>(1)</sup>

Other grievances of the tribesmen were the demands and exactions made by the nazir, the darogas, and their subordinates under the term 'Gunahgari' i.e. fines for offences real or pretended.<sup>(2)</sup> No wonder the rebels inflicted a cut for this on the bodies of their victims. If a person committed suicide or even died a natural death, some one in his village would be accused of murdering him and would only escape on payment of a feribe.<sup>(3)</sup> It was a common sight in the countryside to see the darogas travelling in a palanquin carried by the Kols with the bahangi-loads of rice, ghee, fowls, etc. the forced contributions from the villagers, following them.<sup>(4)</sup> Each village had its own catalogue of such payments and the darogas lived lavishly in spite of their petty salary. There was hardly a daroga "who, on his 25 Rupees a month did not keep his palanquin,

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(1) A Dawk stager, Bengal Hurkaru, 28 Jan. 1832.

(2) Sutherland to Govt. n.d. B.C.1363/54227.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.



and hardly a peadah, who on his 3Rs. a month, did not keep his horse. The ~~former~~ are said to have emulated the Nagburees, the Rajah's brethren and jagaddars."<sup>(1)</sup>

Sutherland thought that this system of Gunafigari was perhaps that from which the people suffered most."<sup>(2)</sup>

The next two cuts were for manipulation of the copper currency and for the salami, a yearly nazar of Rs.1½ realized from each village. Yet another ~~tax~~, for which a cut was inflicted on the body of the victims, was the forced labour on the roads exacted without any remuneration.<sup>(3)</sup>

(It was an irony of fate that some of these roads materially facilitated the operations by the troops against these very people in 1832). There were some other types of forced labour too which came to light in 1839<sup>(4)</sup> and to which the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Lohardugga referred in 1859<sup>(5)</sup> three days' ploughing, three days' spade work, three days' planting and so on. The seventh grievance, for which a cut was inflicted, was the Dak-collection, a contribution of 4½ rupees taken from certain villages to keep open the

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid. The joint commissioners also heard complaints about this begar: Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 5 Apl.1832, Para.21, B.C.1363/54227. Already in 1830 Cuthbert had reported that the villages near the roadside were 'much deserted' owing to the practice of sepoy and officers "pressing the villagers as Begarees." The people "made grievous complaints" to him on this head. Cuthbert to Govt. 15 Apl.1830, Para.40, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons.27 of 11 May 1830(139/51).

(4) See Chapter II, P.162

(5) 'Kols of Chota Nagpur', Calcutta Review, XLIX.



communication between Sherghati and Chota-Nagpur.<sup>(1)</sup>

According to Dent, the total demands were never realized, and since the tax was not general, it must have been the more felt by those who had to pay it.<sup>(2)</sup> Till January 1830 the collections were made by the Chota-Nagpur chief, but in consequence of some irregularities, they were handed over to the Police officers, thus opening another avenue for their exactions.

Of these seven obnoxious tax-items, the liquor-tax, forced labour and the Dak-collections, according to Sutherland, were sanctioned by the Government.<sup>(3)</sup> Blunt thought that it was doubtful whether any of these had the clear sanction of the Government.<sup>(4)</sup> But whether officially sanctioned or not, their collection by Company officials necessarily made British rule hateful: each item might seem trifling in itself, but together they were an intolerable burden.

In fine, this unrest, though unusual in its unanimity and rapid progress, was, like all other revolts, not accidental or spontaneous in its origin. That the tribal

(1) This tax had been imposed in 1829 (though the Dak had been established two years back) under Reg. XX of 1817. The total collections from nine villages of Chota-Nagpur were RO.5495 up to 1831: Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1302/58891.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Sutherland to Govt, n.d., B.C.1363/54227.

(4) Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl. 1832, Ibid.



people had serious grievances against the administration cannot be doubted. Certain proximate causes, however, were accidental and they served to kindle the flame. Three such incidents, already referred to, were the arrest and maltreatment of Sui Munda and the two brothers, Bindrai Manki and Singrai Manki (whose women were also dishonoured).<sup>(1)</sup> Similarly in Tamar, where the raja's death in September 1831 had caused great confusion, the conduct of the Ramgarh nazir acted as the match which set fire to the train. He took no notice of the feelings of the aggrieved mundas and mankis in Tamar<sup>(2)</sup> not even mentioning the outbreak of December 1831 in his report on 2 Jan. 1832<sup>(3)</sup>. Instead he used trickery to secure the arrest of Baijnath Manki. The barkandazes of Govindpur went to Baijnath and said, "Come with me to the Thannah, where the Nazir and Thannadar are, and your villages [of which he had been dispossessed] will be restored to you."<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) Statements, Ghasi Manghia before the nazir, 14 Jan. 1832: Statement, Shaikh Dina, an intelligence messenger of the Agent, S.W.F. 7 Jan. 1832; Statement, Sahu, Mahli, before Bhairo Singh Jamadar in Tamar, Enc. Jt. Comm. to Govt. 12 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

(2) Tamar was one of the worst danger-spots of the area. Colvin had reported in 1821 that the people of this pargana "are a degree more civilized than the tribe of Luxa Cole inhabiting the territory of Singbhoon, but a similar proneness and inclination to plunder and lawless excess of every kind and a like inherent contempt of all subordination and obedience to authority obtain amongst them as amongst the latter... At the sound of their immediate superior's drum (they) instantly assemble and will not hesitate in the Commission of any acts of violence or outrage..." Colvin to Govt. 10 Apl. 1821, Paras. 7-8. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 16 of 8 June 1821 (134/53).

(3) Report, Nazir, 2 Jan. 1832, Enc. Jt. Comm. to Govt. 5 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(4) Statement, Baijnath Manki, Enc. Jt. Comm. to Govt. 12 Feb. 1832. Ibid.



But immediately on Baijnath's arrival at the thana, he was put in irons. "I told them I had neither committed theft, nor murder, that they should imprison me," said Baijnath, "but my remonstrances were disregarded and I was sent a prisoner to Sherghatty."<sup>(1)</sup> This trickery", the Joint Commissioners reported, "so irritated his sons that they exerted their influence with their brethren, and prevailed on them to extend the devastation to the utmost of their power."<sup>(2)</sup> The Patna commissioner, after hearing Baijnath, commented that "the apprehension of Baijnath Mankee, one of the most influential persons among the Coles by the Magistrate's officers, on a charge preferred against him after the disturbance had commenced, caused the extension of the outrages beyond the Estates of the Raja's uncle."<sup>(3)</sup> Thus, Dalton rightly remarks that this unrest, "though no doubt, only the bursting forth of a fire that had long been smouldering, was fanned into flame" by these unfortunate episodes.<sup>(4)</sup>

Here was just the sort of occasion to turn smouldering resentment into active resentment. The Kols, long exploited and looked down upon by the non-tribal people, at last turned

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Jt. Commissioners to Govt. 12 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(3) Lambert to Govt. 15 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.

(4) Dalton, Ethnology, 171.



on their oppressors, and though "outrivalled in craft and cunning, they were irresistible when once the arrows of war, like the fiery cross, had passed among them, rousing the whole countryside to arms." (1)

Palamau:-

It has already been seen (in the introductory chapter) that in 1831 everything was still in a state of flux in Palamau. Cuthbert, with a group of amins, was still examining the land tenures of this estate when the unrest broke out in Chota-Nagpur. (2)

The history of Palamau had been a disturbed one, marked by such resistance to Government as the outbreaks of 1801, 1817 and of 1823 by Sheo Baksha Bhogta (3). Yet in April 1827 Cuthbert had thought fit to write that "should it be satisfactorily made out that Government is entitled to an increased land Revenue from the Pergunnah, it may be levied without hazard to the tranquillity of the country." (4) and from Rs.9,000 in 1818 the revenue demand had risen to Rs.33,326 in 1830. (5) The landholders who suffered from

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(1) Bradley-Birt, Chota-Nagpore, 6.

(2) Cuthbert to Lambert, 11 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54223.

(3) Cuthbert to Govt. 15 Feb.1823, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons.19 of 26 Jan.1826 (137/38).

(4) Cuthbert to Board, 13 Apl. 1827, Para.10, Beng.Cr.Judl. Cons.54 of 14 June 1827 (138/22).

(5) Cuthbert to Govt. 15 Apl.1830, Beng.Rev.Cons.46 of 25 May 1830 (61/60)



this financial squeeze, and who could count on the obedience of the tribal masses<sup>(1)</sup>, rose against the Company in 1832. Neave, after his investigation, admitted that all the Chero and Kharwar jagirdars of Palamau between Mankeari and about two kos south of Tarhasi, with their ryot<sup>t</sup>, were concerned in the rising.<sup>(2)</sup> Even those who, because of disputes with their fellows did not join the insurgents, were not prepared to obey Neave's orders to repel them. They would not take any risks, nor would they incur any serious outlay on behalf of the Company. Neave was left to complain, "it is much to be regretted that the large jag<sup>ee</sup>ardars did not act with the unity and energy of which they were capable."<sup>(3)</sup> The absence of any regular troops or even of effective police, gave them an excuse for not acting in co-operation with the Company. When a few of the jagirdars, after repeated issue of parwanas did go in to Leslieganj they rendered trifling service. Moreover the intrigues of the subordinate local officers, prevented these landholders doing even the little they might have done if left to themselves. They even commanded certain jagirdars not to exert themselves against

(1) Cuthbert to Board, 13 Apl. 1827, Para. 67, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 54 of 14 June 1827 (138/22).

(2) Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 10 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54228.

(3) Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, Para 6, IBID



the rebels. Consequently, only after the insurgents from Chota Nagpur had crossed the Tissa ghat were any real exertions made. (As the Larka Kols of Singhbhum, who had entered Chota-Nagpur, had constituted the heart of the rebel army there. so in Palaman several Kols of Chota-Nagpur entered to incite and support the Cheros and Kharwars).

In his detailed report of 28 April 1832, Neave, like his superior Cuthbert, chose to attribute the rising in Palaman~~x~~ not to any specific grievances of the people but to their general tradition of turbulence. Neave argued, for instance, that the fact that they had voiced no complaints to Cuthbert, who was in Palaman settling revenue matters, and that they had not risen until five weeks after the outbreak in Chota-Nagpur proved that "the Palamow after the outbreak in Chota-Nagpur proved that "the Palamow people were not driven to this sudden flood of meeting [mutiny] by any grievances whatever, but that they were induced to join the Coles by a love of plunder and a hope of impunity and to this it is that they themselves attributed."<sup>(1)</sup> He specifically declared his belief that they had no grievance either against the spirit tax or against the cultivation of the opium poppy. He had reached this conclusion, he said, after questioning those who were arrested.

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(1) Ibid.



He thought that the abkari system in Palamau was quite different from that of Chota-Nagpur, and since he had seen no signs of poppy cultivation he did not even think it necessary to make any enquiries about it. Neave also reported that there were no complaints about the police and argued that "the Cheros and Kerwas of Palamau are of a different race of people to the Coles and are by far too independent to suffer themselves to be trampled upon without calling for redress." (1)

There certainly seems some truth in his observations, but that the pressures of the Company's administration were felt in Palamau as in all the neighbouring tribal areas seems equally certain. Neave had in fact received a petition from certain Palamau villages, on the borders of Chota-Nagpur, against the form of the abkari settlement (2). The joint commissioners found that in fact more opium was produced in Palamau than in Chota Nagpur, though the yield per acre was very low and the price offered by the Company was a poor one, and in November 1832 they recommended "that the people in Palamau should no longer be called on to cultivate it." (3)

It can hardly be believed that the mohurirs and tahsildars

(1) Ibid. Para.4.

(2) Cuthbert to Govt. 29 March 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

(3) Jt.Commissioners to Govt.16 Nov.1832, Para.76, B.C.1502/58891



and the thana police were less ready to abuse their powers in Palamau than in Chota-Nagpur. Nor does the murder of mahajans in Leslieganj and Latehar suggest they were less obnoxious to their debtors in Palamau than elsewhere.

The main cause of the rising, however, was the inefficiency, negligence and even connivance with the rebels of the local subordinates officials. "The intrigues and misconduct of the Sheristadar of the Ramghur Cutchery and of the Qanoongoe of Leslieganj", the Bengal Government noted, "are mentioned to have materially assisted the spread of the disturbances."<sup>(1)</sup> Neave put the main emphasis on the conduct of the sheristadar and ganungo who not only sent false reports to the higher authorities, but also took part in the deliberations of a council of rebels at Leslieganj. "The system of falsehood which these two men practised towards the authorities in regard to the Rajah and those who had really done their Duty," wrote Neave, "is highly culpable and might have led to serious results had full credence been placed on their reports."<sup>(2)</sup> They created a misunderstanding and misapprehension in the minds of the authorities and thus prevented the unity and cooperation

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(1) Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, B.C. 1362/54223.

(2) Ibid.



between the well-intentioned jagidars and the officer-in-command.

That the subordinate staff was corrupt and inefficient cannot be denied. But there must also have been certain specific grievances of the people which goaded them to rise; otherwise the degree of destruction would not have been so large. The list of villages destroyed or partially affected, shows that the loss in the Government villages was larger than in others because they contained more foreigners.<sup>(1)</sup> Unless these foreigners had made themselves obnoxious to the tribal people because of their exactions, why should their wrath have fallen so heavily on them? (Almost all the persons killed were Hindus and Muslims). So Neave was wrong in asserting that the Cheros and Kharwas were induced "by a love of plunder" alone.

Singhbhum:- The history of the East India Company's connections with Singhbhum before 1831 has shown how far from being subdued or pacified the Larka Kolo were, even though they had executed agreements which promised quiet. As the infiltration of non-tribal outsiders increased, and their own chiefs turned against them, the chances of continued quiet in Singhbhum steadily diminished.

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(1) Ibid. Appendix, Neave to J.N. Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54228.



When the outbreak began in Chota-Nagpur, the Larka Kols of Singhbhum, under Bindrai, Singrai, Khandu, Pater and others took the lead. (We have seen already that the raja and the diwan of Parahat positively encouraged Bindrai in his rebellion). Their very names were an encouragement to the Dhangar Kols, who used the words Dohai Khandu Pater<sup>(1)</sup> (Victory to Khandu Pater) as their war cry, and rumours of the Larka Kols' arrival was enough to terrify many non-tribals into instant flight.<sup>(2)</sup>

One important grievance of the Lurka Kols against the non-tribal thikadars of the southern parts of chota-Nagpur was the ill-treatment of their women who went to sell iron in Sonenpur pargana. Thus, Jafar Ali of Gangira, who bought iron in large quantities from Morhu Bazar for export, used to take away all the iron of the women from Singhbhum, and 'indignantly' threw into their baskets only two pice for each seer of iron taken, in spite of the protests of these women.<sup>(3)</sup>

Another important cause of unrest in Singhbhum in this period was the dispute between the Bamanghati chief and his suzerain the Raja of Mayubhanj.<sup>(4)</sup> This dispute was

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(1) Sutherland to Govt. n.d., B.C.1363/54227.

(2) Wilkinson to Neave, 20 Jan.1832, B.C.1363/54227.

(3) Roy, Mundas. 203-204.

(4) This dispute was 25 years old, but from April 1832 to April 1833 it took a violent form: Beng.Govt. to Court of Directors, 23 Oct. 1832, Beng. Letter Recd.Vol.No.120



aggravated by the division of control between the Political Agent on the South-West frontier and the superintendent of the tributary Mahals (i.e. the Cuttack commissioner)<sup>(1)</sup>

The main issue in the dispute was the attempt of the raja to recover some Kol villages from the Mahapater of Bamanghati, and the attempt of the latter to resist it.<sup>(2)</sup>

Though the dispute had been compromised in 1825, at the mediation of the Cuttack commissioner, both parties, with different intentions, had purposely abstained from particularizing in the documents exchanged between them of what villages Khas Des and Khoarder Des (the disputed area) consisted.<sup>(3)</sup> The raja's grant of several villages in the disputed area to Brahmans and temples<sup>(4)</sup> therefore re-opened the quarrel.

The revival of the dispute necessarily involved the Larka Kols of the area. According to their own statement "For a length of time we paid our rent to Neerunjun Dass Mahapater (father of Madho Das) who was placed over us (in 1821) and adhered to the engagement..., but lately emissaries of the Mohurbunge vaja having come into our

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(1) Ibid. Stockwell, the Cuttack commissioner, resigned his Office in June 1832 on this very issue.

(2) Wilkinson & Ricketts, Arbitrators in the dispute, to Govt. 1 Apl. 1833, Beng.Cr.Judl.Cons.1 of 6 Apl. 1833 (140/31).



village, gave us bad advice and tempted us, and we were prevailed on to desert the service of the Mahapater and adhere to the Rajah-Disturbances were the consequence... "(1)

Yet another cause of their unrest, especially in north Singhbhum, was the misunderstanding between the chiefs of Parahat, Khargawan and Saraikela and the weakening of the control of the Parahat raja. This led to frequent raids by the Larka tols into chota-Nagpur and other neighbouring areas in 1832-1833. They also attacked the villages of one chief at the instigation of the other. When Ganga Narain appealed to them for help in 1833 they prepared to move - and doubtless would have done so had Ganga Narain not then been killed in Kharsawan.

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(1) Ibid. Para 22.



# CHAPTER IV

## The Outbreak of Unrest, Its Progress and Suppression - the Second Phase, April 1832 to April 1833:

The first phase of the tribal unrest in Chota-Nagpur, its dependencies, Palamau and Patkum, and its neighbouring parganas had hardly been suppressed through intensive military operations, when away to the east "disturbances broke out in the Jungle Mahals, assuming the most serious character and spreading over part of the Midnapore District and the adjoining tributary states."<sup>1</sup> This second phase of the disturbances commenced with the cold-blooded murder of Madhava Singh, the half-brother and diwan of the zamindar of the Barabhum pargana, at the hands of Ganga Narain Singh, a disgruntled cousin of the zamindar and the diwan. The murder took place on 26 April 1832, and Ganga Narain took care to implicate his ghatwal followers. As eye-witnesses later stated, Ganga Narain first delivered a blow and then "he caused each Sirdar present to fire an arrow into the body of Madhub Sing thinking thereby to secure their continued cooperation and their not betraying him."<sup>2</sup> He and his followers remained at the heart of all the subsequent

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1. Court of Directors to Bengal Govt., 16 Sept. 1835, Para.2, India & Bengal Despatches, No.6, pp.363-364.
  2. Dent, Jt. Commissioner, to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.12, B.C.1501/58886.

troubles in the Jungle Mahals and Dhalbhum, giving them a personal focus which had been lacking in the more generalised movement of protest in Chota-Nagpur proper and Palamau.

Russell, the Magistrate and Collector of the Jungle Mahals district, reported this new outbreak of 'serious disturbances' early in May.<sup>1</sup> His information, received from the Daroga of Barabhum on 28 April, was that Ganga Narain, the original and the chief actor of the outbreak, had kidnapped Madhava Singh because of some private feud. On 1 May he had led his followers against the munsif's cutchery at Barabazar, killing the peons, burning the court, and plundering the bazar.<sup>2</sup>

The local authorities were very ill prepared for dealing with so serious an outbreak. Russell at Bankura, a hundred miles from Calcutta, sixty from Midnapur,<sup>3</sup> was virtually single-handed, and the Burdwan Commissioner Braddon, to whom he ought to have been able first to turn for help, was sick. Nevertheless, after warning Calcutta<sup>4</sup> that military assistance might be required, Russell set off through the heat for Barabazar to see what personal example and influence could do.

He had remarkably few other resources which could

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1. Russell to Govt., 5 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  2. Ibid. Also see Russell to Major Blackall, commanding a detachment of the 50th N.I., 7 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887 and An officer of the 50th N.I., 13 May 1832, India Gazette, 19 May 1832.
  3. See Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, I, 129 and Tassin's map, 1841.
  4. Russell to Govt., 5 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

at once be called into play. At Bankura itself there were no troops worth the name. The treasury and jail guards on duty there, could be of little help in suppressing an outbreak forty-five miles away as the crow flies, especially when those forty-five miles involved an arduous climb into the hills. (The civil station at Bankura was "situated on the verge of the hilly tract that forms the western boundary of Bengal."<sup>1</sup> There was a detachment of regulars under Horsburgh at the headquarters of the neighbouring district of Midnapur <sup>2</sup> - but they were under orders to join Col. Doveton in Bamanghati,<sup>3</sup> as soon as they had been relieved at Midnapur. Further south still, Stockwell, the Commissioner of the Cuttack division, was already in the field at Bamanghati, restoring order in the tributary mahals for which he was responsible. The nazir of the Midnapur court was away in Ghatshila, to the north-west of Bamanghati and fifty-five miles west of Midnapur seeking with a tiny force of 14 barkandazes and a jamadar to ensure supplies for Stockwell.

The irregular and local forces offered Russell little more hope of effective support. The barkandazes under the police darogas, who should have prevented disorders,

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1. Hamilton, op.cit., 129. The hills of Choukerghatta and Pooncha lay in the way from Bankura to Barabazar,
  2. Midnapur was 50 miles from Calcutta and 60 south of Bankura.
  3. J.H.D'ouly, Acting Magt., Midnapur, to Govt., 11 May 1832, Para.7, B.C. 1501/58887. The Larka Kols of Kolhan in Singhbhum, instigated by the Raja of Mayurbhanj, were fighting against the Mahapater of Bamanghati.

were few in number and ill qualified for such duties. The sardar ghatwals responsible for guarding the passes, and the sadials or digwars and tabedars who constituted the zamindari police were no better armed than the insurgents, and were often sympathetic to their fellow tribesmen, especially the ghatwals who became in many cases the chief supporters of Ganga Narain. As for the zamindars, many had antagonized their tribal tenants and were uncertain about their own safety, while Chitreswar Bhal, the zamindar of Dhalbhum and Baleapar, who being nearest to the scene of the outbreak, and in charge of the police of his pargana, might have given them the necessary lead, was incompetent, even perhaps disloyal. Hence while his own estate was being threatened, he remained a silent spectator of events. (In a petition to the Cuttack commissioner asking for a remission of revenue, he just casually mentioned the murder of Madhava Singh and the rising of the Bhumijes of Barabhum under Ganga Narain).<sup>1</sup>

Thus the situation demanded tact and promptness. As had happened at the outbreak of the first phase of unrest, there was a dearth of troops at hand to nip the rising in bud. Moreover, the outbreak had come at an advanced season of the year. Until the monsoon broke fodder would be difficult, but once the rains commenced, many rivers and nullahs would become difficult to ford, the heat and humidity would

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1. G. Stockwell, Cuttack Commissioner, to D'oyly, 7 May 1832, Ibid.

make any march of the regular troops from the cantonment at Barrackpur, a hundred miles away, very trying and malaria would be deadly to the European officers. Russell, therefore, first tried all the possibilities of persuasion, issuing parwanas to the ghatwals, ordering them to disperse and return to their duties, and then he took his military precautions.

Major Blackall was then returning with the right wing of the 50th regiment from Chota-Nagpur to Barrackpur after months of operations in the disturbed areas. The detachment was thoroughly worn out, its quarter-master sergeant had been drowned, and the one thing the men wanted was to get back to cantonment. It was not even properly supplied and equipped and all its spare ammunition had been left with the detachments which remained in Chota-Nagpur for the rains.<sup>1</sup> But these troops were the only ones immediately available, so on 7 May Russell sent an express ordering Blackall to change his route. From Sinkabazar, on the Bankura road, he was to strike south, through Palma and Dhakakand, across the hills and the Kasai river, to Barabazar in the disturbed pargana of Barabhum, twenty-five miles away.<sup>2</sup> The wisdom of Russell's move was agreed and approved by the Bengal Government<sup>3</sup> what Blackall's men thought was another matter!

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1. An officer of the 50th N.I., Barabazar, 13 May 1832, India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

2. Russell to Blackall, 7 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

3. Govt. to Russell, 15 May 1832, Ibid.



Meanwhile what had originally appeared to be a private feud assumed all the features of an organized and extensive insurrection. Ganga Narain had already collected enough grain to support his forces for some time before he had launched his first attack.<sup>1</sup> Now he had collected "a very considerable number of chuars" with whom he was in force in the hills and was "extorting grain in large quantities from the villages."<sup>2</sup> He was reported to be "in high feather" for an attack on the Company's troops.<sup>3</sup> "Nearly every Bhoomij, whether Ghatwal or Ryot, had by this time joined Gunga Narain who announced his determination to clear the country of police Thanas as far as the great Benares road."<sup>4</sup>

Russell, stranded because of inclement weather at Pooncha, 20 miles north-east of Barabazar, ultimately reached Barabazar on 7 May. He had sent parwanas ahead of him calling upon the ghatwals to disperse and to attend their duties - but these had produced no result. Arrived at Barabazar, he tried his best to make personal contact with them, but no one turned up. On the eleventh he wrote to the Burdwan commissioner, "Every Ghatwal and Bumeez, whether Ghatwal or Ryot are, I hear, to a man concerned, and in fact there appears to be a regular choarree system throughout the

1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 13, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Russell to Govt., 7 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.  
According to an officer, 13 May 1832, India Gazette.  
19 May 1832, these hills were "covered with jungle" and separated from Barabazar by a thick, "almost impenetrable jungle". These hills were probably Janteepaharee: See Tassin's map, 1841. Also see Chapter I.

3. Bengal Hurkaru, 9 May 1832, Editorial column.

4. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.14, B.C.1501/58886.

the pergunnah [so] that not a single Ghatwal has as yet made his appearance and I entertain but slight hopes of their coming in"<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless he did not relax his efforts, and on the 13th he was able to find messengers who were prepared to carry his appeal to the head ghatwals of the principal passes of the Barabhum pargana to seize Ganga Narain and to come in to him without fear.<sup>2</sup>

But signs of an impending clash were already in the air. The drums of the insurgents were heard in the vicinity of the magistrate's camp throughout the night of 12 May, and matchlock or musket shots were also heard. On 13 May, too, the drums were occasionally heard in various directions, and a few insurgents were seen on the outskirts of the jungle. An officer of the detachment of the 50th N.I., now arrived in Barabazar, wrote, "This is the commencement of a new war, and how this single wing, short of ammunition and supplies, and completely worn out by incessant fatigue, endured in a march now going on for five months, will be able to accomplish this task assigned to them, in subduing the Bhoomijes of Burrabhoom, entrenched in the midst of jungles, with the rains threatening the troops every minute, I leave you [the Editor] to judge."<sup>3</sup>

Early next morning the camp was "aroused by the presence of considerable number of choars under Gunga Narain

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1. Russell, to W. Braddon, 11 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

2. Russell to Govt., 14 May 1832, Ibid.

3. An officer of the 50th N.I., India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

Sing"<sup>1</sup>. They surrounded the camp on all sides, and then proceeded to launch an attack. Russell tried to pacify them. He advanced to a small party of rebels and told them that he wanted to secure the rebel chief and his main accomplices, but that others might be pardoned if they surrendered. The ghatwals, he promised, would be retained in possession of their jagir lands and a reward of 800 rupees might be paid if the culprits were seized and made over to the authorities. But his terms were rejected outright and several parties attacked the camp with matchlock-balls and arrows.

Russell's official account of this affair baldly states that the assailants 2 - 3,000 strong were driven off without any difficulty. But the newspaper account is much more vivid and interesting. Already on the 13th night the chuars had burnt some huts on the south-western extremity of Barabazar "probably with the intent, as we may gather from their conduct at daylight, to decoy the troops to the fire, while they might enter the camp in the opposite direction from the jungles, which skirt us on all sides."<sup>2</sup> Then towards the morning Ganga Narain advanced to the camp with Nagara or drum beating and trumpets blowing and his large body of followers, with flashing swords, battle-axes, bows and arrows and other weapons. They came "with horrible shouts, yells, beating of drums, so directly upon us, for the express purpose of attacking the camp."<sup>3</sup> Some of them

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1. Russell to Govt., 14 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

2. An officer of the 50th N.I., 14 May 1832, India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

3. Ibid.

danced with large swords and shields in their hands "in an attitude of defiance."<sup>1</sup>

The insurgents, from the cover of a large tank, then opened fire with matchlocks, even perhaps with slings, for one injury suffered was a hit in the arm with a stone sustained by Lt. Macdonald. The Russut [supply ] guard returned the fire from within the village, and then the grenadiers company and another party under Macdonald, advancing down either flank of the tank drove off the chuars, who carried away their dead.<sup>2</sup>

So ended an action which one delighted officer reported as fit to "stand pre-eminently exalted in the annals of sepoy warfare" - the rout of a multitude by only 300 men.<sup>3</sup> It was significant, rather, for the determination of the initial insurgent attack, and for their refusal to be dismayed by their losses, for the very next morning they returned to harassing the camp, seeking to cut off its supplies.<sup>4</sup> Ganga Narain seemed to have been able to persuade his followers that he was invincible, and Russell, at least, was impressed by the influence he exerted over his tribal people for he proceeded to proclaim Ganga Narain a rebel and offer a reward of Rs.1,000 for his apprehension, dead or

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Rasad or Russut = a store of grain provided for, or sent to, an army.

3. Report from Camp Barabazar, 15 May 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 22 May 1832.

4. Russell to Govt., 15 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887. Also see Report from Camp Barabazar, 15 May 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 22 May 1832.

alive.<sup>1</sup> He also issued new parwanas to the ghatwals to surrender and to deliver up Ganga Narain so that they might be left in possession of their lands. At the same time he wrote to Government to ask whether a general free pardon might be granted to the ghatwals if they surrendered without bringing in their followers and whether he could hold out any promise of pecuniary rewards to the ghatwals for securing the person of Ganga Narain and other culprits.<sup>2</sup>

Since it was clear that the disturbances were not quickly to be suppressed Russell wrote asking for four more companies with two guns, and further supplies of ammunition to be sent to him at Barabazar.<sup>3</sup> On the same day Braddon, from Burdwan, wrote to Government to ask that a small military force be despatched to Bankura to restore the confidence of the inhabitants of that district.<sup>4</sup> D'oyly, at Midnapur had likewise asked for a body either of regulars, or of the Calcutta Militia to be posted on his borders with the Jungle Mahals, ready to move under his orders to any threatened spot.<sup>5</sup>

To these requests the Bengal Government replied by ordering "a detachment consisting of a wing of a Regiment of Native Infantry and two six-pounder guns, manned with Golundauz, and equipped for field service," to march "as

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1. Russell to Govt., 14 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887,
  2. Russell to Govt., 15 May 1832, Ibid.
  3. Russell to Govt., 14 May 1832, Ibid.
  4. Braddon to Govt., 14 May 1832, Para.2, Ibid.
  5. D'oyly to Govt., 13 May 1832, Para.7, Ibid.



early as practicable from Barrackpore to reinforce the wing of the 50th Regiment" employed in the disturbed area.<sup>1</sup> The force, under Lt.Col. Cooper was ordered to act as directed by Russell, though it was laid down that "all military operations will be under the exclusive direction of the commanding officer," who would be "the sole judge of the means to be used to effect the object and of the expediency of undertaking any operations that may be necessary for its accomplishment."<sup>2</sup> During the rains, however, the Government expected Russell to station the troops at some healthy spot, and to rely upon the zamindars who should be asked to recruit more paiks. Other mercenaries, capable of withstanding the climate, he might recruit directly at Government expense - a course which had proved very effective during the 1812 to 1818 disturbances.<sup>3</sup>

The Government, however, still had hopes that a policy of conciliation might prove more useful than force. They suggested that ghatwals who had joined the rebellion should be pardoned if they atoned for their misconduct, and the promise given to head ghatwals who surrendered that they would not be displaced. Prisoners who had grave criminal

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1. Military Deptt. to Astt. Quarter Master General of the Army, 17 May 1832, Ibid.
  2. Govt. to Russell, 20 May 1832, Para.10, Ibid. The Government admitted that these re-inforcements were "with difficulty furnished from the Presidency station: Govt. to Jt.Commissioners, 17 May 1832. B.C.1363/54228.
  3. Govt. to Russell, 20 May 1832, Para.11, B.C.1501/58887. Also see D'oyly to Govt., 11 May 1832, Ibid.

records should be detained for future trial, but inferior agents and lesser offenders might be released with suitable admonitions and under adequate security for their future good conduct.<sup>1</sup> As for Russell's offers of a reward for seizing Ganga Narain dead or alive - an offer which Braddon had approved<sup>2</sup> - that the Government forbade. "It is objectionable in principle", they wrote, "to set a price upon the head of an offender, because assassination is likely to result and means to be adopted for the attainment of the reward which it is not possible to sanction. It will be sufficient to offer a reward for his apprehension, and if in the attempt to apprehend him resistance should be made, and death be the consequence, it will then remain for consideration whether the circumstances which attended the event were such as to justify the result, and to entitle to the reward or otherwise."<sup>3</sup> Braddon, writing almost at the same time, was less ready to forgive than the Calcutta authorities: he believed that the ghatwals, who had had a duty and obligation to help stop the disturbances, should be punished for their complicity in Ganga Narain's rebellion by the loss of their lands.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, though he had heard from Russell of the ghatwals' impertinent rejection of his overtures,<sup>5</sup> he too would not sanction any active measures.

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1. Govt. to Russell, 20 May 1832, Paras. 4-5, Ibid.

2. Braddon to Russell, 14 May 1832, Ibid.

3. Govt. to Russell, 20 May 1832, Para.6, Ibid.

4. Braddon to Govt., 19 May 1832, Para.3, Ibid.

5. Russell to Braddon, 21 May 1832, Ibid.

warning Russell to avoid any effusion of blood.<sup>1</sup> As for the press, that spoke with an almost unanimous voice, "in deprecating the indiscriminate destruction of villages and grain, which but too often attends an incursion of troops into what they consider an enemy's country."<sup>2</sup>

The march of the detachment from Barrackpur for the disturbed area created a momentary stir of alarm in Calcutta,<sup>3</sup> quickly stilled, however, by the false report that "the affair of the chooars has been happily adjusted."<sup>4</sup> But when the troops, the 25th Regiment N.I. and detachments from the 31st, 33rd and 48th reached Bankura on 23 May, they found plenty to do. Fifty men of the 33rd were immediately pushed forward to Barabazar, and most of the rest of "the formidable number of 572 fighting men," with the two guns, soon followed.<sup>5</sup>

Their presence was needed, for Ganga Narain had meanwhile been establishing contacts with the zamindars of the parganas in the neighbourhood of Barabhum. For instance, he had written to Chetan Singh, the Thakur of Kharsawan in Singhbhum, to the south-west of the Jungle Mahals, that he had taken up arms because the Jungle Mahals magistrate had

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1. Braddon to Russell, 21 May 1832, Para.2, Ibid.
  2. Calcutta Courier, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 24 May 1832. This view was expressed in support of the India Gazette's views.
  3. See, for example, articles in Calcutta Courier, Editorial, 19 May 1832, and comments to the above John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 24 May 1832.
  4. Calcutta Courier, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 24 May 1832.
  5. 'A Sub', Camp Bankura, 27 May 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 2 June 1832.

insulted the zamindar of Patkum by searching his private apartments (during the first phase of the unrest in January-February 1832).<sup>1</sup> He had also written two petitions to Russell to prove that he had some legitimate grievances and that he had the sympathies of the Barabhum zamindar's family.<sup>2</sup>

Russell used the contact provided by these petitions from Ganga Narain to send into his camp the proclamations ordering the ghatwals to return home, and offering pardon if they did.<sup>3</sup> When on 28 May a large body of insurgents surrounded the Barabazar camp, but without attacking it, Russell again got in touch with them, through intermediaries, to offer free pardon if they submitted. Their simple answer was that they were the tabedars (henchmen) of Ganga Narain without whose advice they could not commit themselves to anything. The fact seems to have been that the ghatwals, apprehensive of being lodged in prison like their brethren in Patkum in the first phase of the unrest<sup>4</sup>, would not come forward for submission. They retired, however, with the promise to send a reply next day. But no answer came, none of the rebels surrendered.<sup>5</sup> Russell made his last effort on

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1. Braddon to Govt., 4 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887; T.Wilkinson, Acting Political Agent, S.W.Frontier, to Russell, 17 May 1832, Ibid. Also see anonymous letter from Camp Barabazar, 24 May 1832, India Gazette, 30 May 1832.
  2. Translated Petitions, Appendices 1 and 2, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. An anonymous letter dated camp Barabazar, 24 May 1832, India Gazette, 30 May 1832.
  4. See Chapter III.
  5. Braddon to Govt., 31 May 1832, Para.4, B.C.1501/58887.

the 30th evening when two sepoy were sent into the jungle with guides to bring the chuars to reason. The rebels, however, armed and hostile, shot at the guides. Next day, after three weeks in Barabazar, and a fortnight in which he had not used the regular troops with him, but had sought to win over the insurgents, Russell had to leave, disappointed and ill.<sup>1</sup>

The following day the servant of a head ghatwal informed Captain Barker that six of the leading ghatwals would come in next day to explain their attitude. But they never turned up. Martin then issued fresh parwanas to the ghatwals and others, stating that with the exception of 41 ringleaders, all others would be pardoned if they submitted.<sup>2</sup> But this also had no effect. The bearers of the parwanas were threatened with dire consequences by the insurgents. Martin saw but a gloomy prospect of achieving a settlement, because of the unanimity of the parties and because of the climate and the nature of the country.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, reports now coming in from the Bamanghati tributary mahal, 50 miles to the south-west in the Singhbhum area, were just as depressing. Like the Barabazar outbreak, the Bamanghati disturbance of the Larka Kols at first seemed trifling.<sup>4</sup> The Cuttack commissioner Stockwell had expected

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1. Russell left for Bankura and his assistant, Martin, was placed in charge of the Barabazar camp: Braddon to W.H. Martin, 31 May 1832, Ibid.
  2. W.H. Martin to Braddon, 2 June 1832, Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. India Gazette, Editorial, 2 May 1832. Also see Calcutta Courier, 2 June 1832.



to settle it by going to the spot with a company of the 47th.<sup>1</sup> But they had soon found themselves reduced to straits, by the cutting off of their supplies, when the rebels occupied a strong pass in the rear. The 38th regiment had then to be called up from Midnapur to relieve the situation.

At the end of May Stockwell induced the refractory zamindar to submit, but the cost of this minor success proved heavy indeed. For "the extreme unhealthiness of the country proved, ..., more destructive than any hostile force, and such was its unsparing severity, that not one officer of the corps was capable of exercising command. Several died; and the rest escaped death only by an immediate return to their headquarters at Midnapore".<sup>2</sup> The Bengal Hurkaru reported that "out of seventeen Europeans, only one escaped fever - the Commissioner Mr. Stockwell. The hand of death has been busy, and numerous beyond all precedent have been the casualties. Dead - Surgeon Macra, Lts Mesham and Fullerton, Ensign Manningford, Cadet Pinder, and Quarter Master Sergeant Curtis. Six dead out of seventeen in a little more than a fortnight."<sup>3</sup> The dangers of the climate had been made worse by the lack of adequate medical attention: "so many deaths - so many sick", as a newspaper commented in its editorial, "and only one medical man (Craigie) to attend

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1. 'Miles', Calcutta, 10 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 June 1832, Also see Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 23 Oct. 1832 (Judl. letter 23 of 1832), Letters Received from Bengal, No.120.
  2. Wilson, Mill's History of British India, 1858, IX, 237. Also see 'Fitz-George', Midnapur, 6 June 1832, India Gazette, 9 June 1832.
  3. 'Miles', Calcutta, 10 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 June, 1832.

to them all."<sup>1</sup>

When sickness broke out among Capt. Impey's detachment of the 50th at Barabazar, and similar losses seemed to threaten, the Bengal Government urged the Burdwan commissioner to withdraw the troops.<sup>2</sup> The Jungle Mahals magistrate was told with equal insistence that "the season of the year and the nature of the climate render it highly expedient that the troops should be withdrawn as early as may be compatible with the peace of the district and the safety of its inhabitants."<sup>3</sup> Such a toll of sickness, for so little accomplished, also produced considerable criticism of the whole policy of punitive expeditions conducted by regular troops. A writer in the Bengal Hurkaru denounced the policy of disbanding the irregulars and of transferring the duties of the police to regular sepoy battalions. "We ought to bear in mind," he said, "that in expeditions of this dismal nature there is nothing to cheer and animate the soldier - no fighting, no glory, no triumph. No foe that will stand for a minute before him, nothing to be encountered but death in its worst form, and with its most horrible accompaniments, fever and delirium."<sup>4</sup>

It had, in fact, become evident to the officials, that a withdrawal of the troops into cantonment was

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1. Bengal Hurkaru, 6 June 1832, Editorial column.

2. Govt. to Braddon, 26 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

3. Govt. to Russell, 20 May 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

4. 'Miles', Calcutta, 10 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 June 1832.

essential. (The troops from the tributary mahal had already been withdrawn ). Nevertheless, Martin was unwilling to withdraw without at least one attempt to use his troops to frighten the rebels into submission. Accordingly on 2 June, with the headquarters of the 25th or Marine Regiment, Capt. Barker's detachment of the 33rd, a part of the 31st and the Artillery, Martin moved off against Band-dihi,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles south-west from the Barabazar camp, which was Ganga Narain's own village and where the rebels were then reported. Captain Haslam was left with parts of the 50th, 25th and 31st Regiments to guard the camp.<sup>1</sup>

On the first day the troops advanced through the deserted villages to Berada<sup>2</sup> on the Punj-Sardari pass, 4 kos away. In the afternoon some sixty rebels under Shital Ghatwal appeared.<sup>3</sup> Martin tried to reason with them, they refused to listen. On 4 June, when Martin's force advanced again, the rebels, from the jungles and hills, used their bows to such an effect that some 19 sepoy were wounded. The counter-fire - grape and musketry - had little effect because of the thickness of the jungle.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Martin to Braddon, 3 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887. Also see Braddon to Govt., 4 June 1832, Ibid. Also see anonymous letter, Barabazar, 5 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 12 June 1832.
  2.  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the south-west of Barabazar in the pargana map of Barabhum, 1865-66.
  3. Martin to Braddon, 3 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887 . Also see 'A Sub', Barabazar, 7 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 15 June 1832.
  4. Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para.2, B.C.1501/58887.

On arrival at the important village of Bamni, Martin again tried to treat with the insurgents, but gave it up when a ghatwal attempted of a sudden to shoot him.<sup>1</sup> The detachment was now close to Ganga Narain's village, but Martin was so convinced of the set hostility of the people and so worried by the setting in of the monsoon that he decided to withdraw. This unexpected movement was at first unopposed, but in later skirmishes three sepoys and a number of insurgents were wounded. Supplies coming up to him by bullock cart and elephant were also attacked and plundered, so that a further force had to be sent to cover their continued withdrawal.<sup>2</sup>

The first military effort had thus proved indecisive and not without cost. Supplies had been looted, some twenty sepoys and many more camp followers wounded<sup>3</sup> and the whole force severely tried by an advance in heat and rain through difficult hill jungles which made it impossible to provide tents. Ganga Narain's stronghold had escaped attack, all attempts to win over the ghatwals had failed. The only success had been that a handful of insurgents, including such ringleaders as Boli Pater and Lakhman Naya had been

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1. Ibid. Para. 3.

2. Martin to Braddon, 6 June 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Braddon to Govt., 7 June 1832, Ibid. 1 Lt.Col., 1 Naick, 7 sepoys, 11 campfollowers and a few horses were wounded on 3 and 4 June: Report from Barabazar, 5 June 1832, India Gazette, 11 June 1832.

3. 'A Sub', Barabazar, 7 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 15 June 1832. Also see Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

killed.<sup>1</sup>

On his return to Barabazar, Martin wrote to the commissioner urging that the troops should be withdrawn now that the rains had set in.<sup>2</sup> He argued that the unhealthiness of the area must lead to widespread sickness - Capt. Impey and Lt. Graham of the 50th N.I. and Lt. Wilson of the 33rd had already succumbed<sup>3</sup> and gone on sick leave - that it would be difficult to ensure supplies and impossible to protect the pargana with regular troops during the monsoon. He suggested that instead a force of at least 400 men including barandazes of the late Burdwan provincial battalion should be recruited, together with a sapper force of 50 beldars for clearing jungle tracks. Sanction was granted by the Bengal Government for the raising of 200 or more irregulars<sup>4</sup> under Ensign Francis, to take over when the sepoy force withdrew. The Calcutta council again expressed itself anxious to see an early withdrawal of the regular troops, and on 7 June they marched from Barabazar for Bankura.

The action of Martin in suddenly terminating the campaign, and thus leaving Ganga Narain triumphant was so

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1. Martin to Braddon, 6 June 1832, Para.1, Ibid. Also see Report from Bankura, 11 June 1832, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 15 June 1832.
  2. Martin to Braddon, 6 June 1832, Para.2, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. Report from Camp Barabazar, 5 June 1832, India Gazette, 11 June 1832.
  4. Govt. to Braddon, 6 June 1832, Para.2, B.C.1501/58887. These irregulars might be armed with muskets if they could be trained in their use: Ibid. Para.3.



impolitic in appearance that an explanation was demanded both by the Burdwan commissioner and by the Government. Martin took cover behind Russell's instructions not to interfere in military matters, and claimed that "Colonel Cooper, was decidedly of opinion that it was useless to proceed and ... I concurred in the propriety of that opinion."<sup>1</sup> He supported the wisdom of Cooper's decision by stressing the difficulties caused by the swollen nullahs and miserable tracks. But in that case, one might ask, why had he agreed on the 3rd to the operations being undertaken if by 7 June it was necessary to stop them? The effect upon the chuars could not but be to reinforce their belief in Ganga Narain's claim that he was an Avatar or Kol (an incarnation of the God of Death) and under the all-powerful protection of the goddess Kali.<sup>2</sup> Whatever reason Martin might assign for not hazarding a further advance the fact remains that his failure had left the district exposed indeed to the depredations of a "rebel, who has defied the British Government, assumed the title of Rajah, is de facto zemindar, receives the revenue, and disposes of the lands, the property and even the lives of the population at his despotic will and pleasure."<sup>3</sup> Hence, as it was neatly put by a commentor<sup>ta</sup>, "the end of the rope, at least in this quarter, we have permitted

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1. Martin to Braddon, 9 June 1832, Para. 1, B.C.1501/58887.

2. Anonymous letter dated Dhaka-Kew<sup>d</sup>, 8 June 1832, India Gazette, 14 June 1832.

3. Ibid.

to slip through our fingers, and it will require no small degree of energy to seize and secure it again."<sup>1</sup>

After the withdrawal of the sepoy force there were only fifty men, including the jail barkandazes, whom the commissioner could send to take their place. The commissioner did continue to collect irregulars "to protect the peaceable and well-disposed inhabitants of Burrabhum",<sup>2</sup> but meanwhile he could not expect much from his tiny forces, when ten times their number of regulars had failed. As the Bengal Government later admitted, "the services of this force were not found in the first instance effectual to deter or oppose the insurgents."<sup>3</sup>

Nor was the position made easier by the growing signs of disaffection in the native officials of the pargana. Of the ghatwals, who were to assist the temporary force, all but twenty-seven had deserted by 9 June.<sup>4</sup> Some of the zamindars, notably those of Manbhum and Pachet, were also clearly wavering, and the Patkum zamindar's appeal for help to the zamindars of Singhbhum and Tamar was suspicious in the extreme. Indeed, the daroga of Patkum emphatically declared that both ghatwals and zamindars were in league with the chuars. Dent, the joint-commissioner, emphatically

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1. Ibid. There was, of course, a wing of the 50th N.I., with two guns, at distant Bankura, but that had no effect on the rebels.
  2. Braddon to Govt., 7 June 1832, Para.4, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 31 March 1834, Para.7, B.C.1501/58885.
  4. Braddon to Govt., 9 June 1832, Para.2, B.C.1501/58887.

asserted in his final report that in this period Ganga Narain was busy negotiating with the surrounding zamindars "all of whom there is not a doubt were in communication with him."<sup>1</sup>

Efforts to recruit irregulars were necessarily increased, and up-country men from neighbouring districts, as well as local men were enlisted. By 10 June 200 of these irregulars were stationed at Puncha, a village on the Kasai river, twenty miles north-east of Barabazar, and on the flank of the great mass of hills between the upper Kasai and Subarna rekha rivers. Troops there, with those at Bankura, could be expected to prevent any northward movement of the rebels. Robert Francis, who after a squabble about his allowances, had accepted the command, was instructed "to act on the defensive unless the Insurgents may attack his force, or attempt<sup>d</sup> to plunder or commit other depredations in any village in the neighbourhood, where he may be posted."<sup>2</sup> The ringleaders were to be seized, the less implicated ones were to be prevailed upon to disperse and full information about the movements and designs of Ganga Narain had to be procured.<sup>3</sup>

Francis' own view was that the utmost that could be done was to prevent the insurgents from encroaching on the neighbouring parganas. His force would contain them on the

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.16, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Braddon to Govt., 11 June 1832, Para.9, B.C. 501/58887.

3. Ibid.

north, and he recommended that the zamindars of Manbhum, Pachet, Patkum, Chota-Nagpur, Silli, Tamar and Singhbhum should continue the cordon from his position westwards, and in a great sweep round to the south of Barabazar.<sup>1</sup> By 20 June a second batch of up-country recruits was reported ready for despatch to Francis, and Braddon had also ordered the selection of yet another hundred men.<sup>2</sup> The Bengal authorities sanctioned the arming of Francis' men with carbines<sup>3</sup> to give them a superiority over the tribal bowmen, and a second levy post, Gopalpur, four miles north-west of Barabazar, was selected to carry the defensive line from Bankura yet another twenty miles westward.

While these dispositions were being made, there had been a period of quiet: the Bhumij were busy with their ploughing and sowing, then in full swing, while Ganga Narain was reported busy preparing the marriage of his daughter. But at the end of June, disturbances flared up, this time in Patkum, to the west of Barabhum, where the most strenuous efforts of the daroga failed to keep the area quiet. On 22 June Tulsi Digwar and Berah Singh<sup>4</sup> with perhaps 500 of their tribal followers were reported marching to attack Patkum. On the 25th Ganga Narain was reported to be at

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1. R. Francis to Braddon, 18 June, 1832, Paras. 1-3, Ibid.

2. Braddon to Govt., 20 June 1832, Para.9, Ibid.

3. Govt. to Braddon, 20 June 1832, Para.3, Ibid.

4. They were the ringleaders during the first phase of the unrest in this pargana, but they could not be apprehended despite the best efforts of the authorities.

Kurdadang, with 1,000 men, preparing to attack the thana.<sup>1</sup> From the 25th to the 27th reports continued to pour in of large insurgent bodies preparing to attack, and finally, when the Patkum zamindar had refused to shelter the daroga for fear of being himself attacked, the latter fled to Kharsawan in Singhbhum, 15 miles away.<sup>2</sup>

The local authorities suspected the Patkum zamindar of complicity in these developments. Russell, from past experience of the zamindars' and ghatwals' disloyalty during the first phase of unrest, found in these events "a convincing proof of the intrigue of the zemindar to remove the Darogah from the Pergunnah."<sup>3</sup> He pointed out that the insurgents' avowed object was to attack the thana only and not to secure their former lands (as stated by the zamindar in his last petition of 30 June).

Be that as it may, Patkum continued to be in commotion till early July. The insurgents drove away cattle from Lepamkhurd, terrorised people in Dulmi, Odaldi, Jundihi and Kudlang and finally came right down the Karkari valley to Inchagarh on the 30th June to secure, according to a report, certain promises from the zamindar about their former land.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Patkum zamindar to Russell, 28 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

2. Petition, Thakur Chetan Singh, Kharsawan, to Wilkinson, 29 June 1832, Ibid. Also see Petition, Shaikh Supam, Daroga of Patkum, 30 June 1832, Ibid. Also Petition, Patkum zamindar, 30 June 1832, Ibid.

3. Russell to Braddon, 10 July 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

4. Petition, Daroga Shaikh Supam, 30 June 1832, Ibid. Also see Petition, Patkum zamindar, 30 June 1832, Ibid.



However, no one was killed during these raids.

The authorities could do little to check the depredations. Though Braddon, like Russell, thought that "the whole affair was schemed and brought about by some of the relations and dependants of the zemindar, chiefly with a view of causing the removal of the Patkum Thanah, and preventing the court's obtaining the attendance of the witnesses required in the trials of the prisoners concerned in the former disturbances [in January-February 1832] in that pergunnah",<sup>1</sup> he was not in favour of any attempt to re-establish the police thana there: "It would hardly be possible at the present moment to keep a sufficient force on the spot for the protection of the Thannah and therefore under such circumstances I shall refrain attempting to re-establish it until it can be effected with a greater probability of success."<sup>2</sup> The Bengal Government regretted that the Patkum daroga had withdrawn, but agreed that no effort should be made permanently to reinstate him - indeed they blamed Russell for having established the thana at all: "the maintenance of a Thannah in the jungle estate of Patcoom is opposed to the general system of police established in that tract of country [i.e. the zamindari or ghatwali police]".<sup>3</sup> In the end it was local influence that restored order in

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1. Braddon to Govt., 10 July 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Govt. to Braddon, 17 July 1832, Para.4, Ibid.

Patkum, when Chetan Singh, the Thakur of Kharsawan, brought pressure to bear, impressing "upon the mind of the Patcoom zemindar the guilt he will incur by joining or aiding directly or indirectly Gunga Narain Sing or any of his adherents."<sup>1</sup>

Before Patkum had been restored to tranquillity, Singhbhum to the south-west corner of the district was disturbed, when the Larka Kols spilled north from Kolhan on a sharp foray against Saraikela, killing 28 of the zamindar's men, and driving off cattle<sup>2</sup>. This was followed at the end of July by another flare up at the opposite corner of the Jungle Mahals, this time by Ganga Narain. On 25 July he was reported to be in force in Ambikanagar pargana, with Bahadur Singh of Koilapal, and to be preparing, with other chuars mustering in thousands on the Barabazar road at Dhaka-kend, for an attack on the levy at Puncha.<sup>3</sup> On 26 July similar reports reached Russell from Supur and Raipur parganas, west and east of Ambikanagar - which was attacked that very day by about 3,000 chuars under Ganga Narain.<sup>4</sup> They burnt down the

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1. Braddon to Russell, 14 July 1832, Para.4, Ibid.
  2. Petition, Kunwar Ajambar Singh of Saraikela, to Wilkinson. 6 July 1832, Enclosure to Wilkinson to Govt., 13 July 1832 B.C.1503/58897. The zamindar was advised not to retaliate during the rains, and the troops at Kishanpur remained inactive, though their subadar sought to conciliate the Kols: Subadar Shaikh Kadir Baksha to Wilkinson, 10 July 1832, Ibid.
  3. R. Francis to Braddon, 26 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887. Also see Petition, Zamindar of Manbhum, 26 July 1832, Ibid.
  4. Petition, Daroga of Raipur, 26 July 1832, Enclosure, Russell to Braddon, 28 July 1832, Ibid. Also Petition, Zemindar of Supur, 26 July 1832, Ibid.

thana and the mahafiz department with all their papers, looted the bazar and murdered Mathura Rai, a physician<sup>1</sup>. According to a later report the large and flourishing town of Ambikanagar was entirely pillaged and plundered.<sup>2</sup> When Ganga Narain followed this success by taking possession of the important village of Ankro, the Manbhum zamindar's nerve broke. There was a "wretched state of dissension and dis-<sup>3</sup>union in the Rajah's family and even among his own children" and he therefore thought resistance useless, and even returned the 50 men sent to his aid by the Supur zamindar.<sup>4</sup>

The example of the Manbhum zamindar was followed by the Supur Chief, who came to terms with Ganga Narain. Thereafter, though Bishnupur, down river from Ambikanagar, was saved by Russell's exertions,<sup>5</sup> no other zamindari held out. Ganga Narain was able to move steadily south, attacking Raipur, whose raja presented him a horse, Sham-Sundarpur and Phulkusma.<sup>6</sup> His forces thus traversed the whole eastern flank of the Jungle Mahals from Puncha to Phulkusma almost unopposed: They were joined by the Bhumij of the parganas they passed through, "who, in conjunction with those of

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1. Petition, Guardian of Ambikanagar zamindar, 13 Sawan, 1239 Fasli, Enclosure, Russell to Braddon, 30 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.16, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Petition, zamindar of Supur, 26 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  5. Braddon to Govt., 30 July 1832, Para.5, Ibid.  
Also see Russell to Braddon, 1 Aug. 1832, Para.4, Ibid.
  6. Ibid. Paras. 1-2.

Silda and Koilapal, commenced a general system of plunder and choarce which continued till the 34th Regiment Native Infantry reached Riepore in the end of November."<sup>1</sup>

The zamindars of the area proved almost as ready as their Bhumij tenants to join Ganga Narain. They had lost any heart for resistance when Government withdrew its troops, and in any case many were near relations of Ganga Narain. Moreover, as the commissioners admitted, so many of them were deeply involved in debt, that they were not loth to see the money-lenders destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

The actions which the Government now took must only have encouraged the defection of the zamindars. The levy at Puncha had done nothing during the attack on Manbhum, and the appeals for regular troops from Bankura had been refused Francis by the commissioner. On 30 July the levy was ordered to abandon Puncha and fall back upon Chaukaghati, ten miles nearer to Bankura. The commissioner recognised that under the circumstances it was "almost too much to hope being able to check their career."<sup>3</sup>

This withdrawal encouraged Ganga Narain to push on south into the Midnapur district, to Dampara. There was panic in Silda, Balrampur and the neighbouring thanas more especially when the rumour spread that the chuars of Bogree,

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.16, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Braddon to Govt., 28 July 1832, Para.5, B.C.1501/58887.  
Also see Chapter VI.

3. Braddon to Govt., 30 July 1832, Para.5, B.C.1501/58887.

famous for the most atrocious acts of "rapine and murder"<sup>1</sup> were associating themselves with his forces. The despatch of troops from Midnapur (in fact only 20 men with a few spare muskets for the thana barkandazes)<sup>2</sup> was enough to head Ganga Narain off westward, but not to check his depredations. He left two or three hundred men under his lieutenant Raghu Nath Singh at Dampara,<sup>3</sup> and set off north-west for Barabhum via Dhadka ghat. While the Bengal Government and the press<sup>4</sup> were bewailing the ill effects of the too precipitate withdrawal in June of the regular troops, which had "instilled into their minds an idea of having compelled their retrograde movements, which idea gave an air of invincibility to them"<sup>5</sup>, the insurgents were proceeding to take full advantage of the unprotected state of the country. Ganga Narain, with thousands of his followers, entered Pachet pargana to the north of Barabhum<sup>6</sup> with the encouragement of a rival faction in the raja's family. The rani's

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1. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, I, 155.

2. D'oyly to R. Hunter, Cuttack Commissioner, 31 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

3. D'oyly to Hunter, 8 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

Raghu Nath was put in forcible possession of the jagir of Dampara which had been escheated in the past, and Ganga Narain directed the Dhalbhum raja to grant him a sanad for the same: Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.16, B.C.1501/58886.

4. A private letter, August, Calcutta Courier, 15 Sept. 1832. Also see Govt. to Braddon, 13 Aug. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

5. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.18, B.C.1501/58886.

6. Braddon to Govt., 6 Aug. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

Also see Joint Petition of the brother and uncle of the Pachet raja, 24 and 25 Sawan, Ibid.



adherents fled with the raja to Raghunathpur on the new Benares road.<sup>1</sup> Consequently Gopal nagar and Puncha were attacked without any opposition and Kesargarh, 7 miles north-west of Puncha, the residence of the raja, was also threatened.

Now the blunder committed by the local authorities in withdrawing the levy from Puncha was realized. Russell issued a parwana to the zamindar and his diwan to return forthwith to Kesargarh to put heart into his demoralised followers. He also requested the commissioner to send regular troops from Bankura to tackle the worsening situation in Pachet.<sup>2</sup>

The commissioner sent out a party of 80 men of the Bankura detachment<sup>3</sup> and two hundred men of Francis' levy to Pachet. He also wrote to the Joint Commissioners in Chota-Nagpur to ask the zamindars on the borders of the Jungle Mahals to prevent the insurgents passing through the ghats. Moreover, he directed Russell to write to D'oyly in Midnapur to do the same from the south-western direction.<sup>4</sup>

But D'oyly was himself facing a sea of troubles created by Raghu Nath Singh in Dhalbhum. There was a serious dissension in Raja Chitreswar Dhal's family and there was no local check to the movement of Raghu Nath.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.18, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Russell to Braddon, 11 Aug. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

3. Braddon to Govt., 12 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. D'oyly to Hunter, 13 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

D'oyly did, however, strengthen the northern borders of his district and so seek to contain Ganga Narain, sending a jamadar and twenty barkandazes to reinforce the zamindari police of Jhargram and Jambani, the estates between Dhalbhum in the west and Silda in the east.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, to prevent the flight of the insurgents from Pachet and Barabhum to Dhalbhum and Singhbhum in the south-west, he sent 44 men including treasury guards under a daroga direct to Narsing-garh, the residence of the Dhalbhum zamindar, who was directed to collect paiks to protect his frontiers. D'oyly also got an assurance from Col. Doveton, commanding the 38th N.I. at Midnapur, that he would go to the aid of the treasury guards and the police in case of emergency.<sup>2</sup>

By the middle of August, with troops in position at Bankura, Puncha and Kesargarh in the north, and parties holding the line from Silda to the Dhalbhum in the south, the Burdwan commissioner felt himself able to act offensively against the insurgents in the Jungle Mahals. With a detachment of the 50th N.I. he reached Kesargarh on 13 August, to the north of the Kasai.<sup>3</sup>

The insurgents, having plundered and burnt several Pachet villages now withdrew to Barabhum pargana, causing such alarm that "on the sound of the 'Nakara' or drum being heard, the inhabitants of every village (though it may

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1. Ibid.

2. D'oyly to Hunter, 14 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

3. Braddon to Govt., 15 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

contain 3000), desert the place and leave their all to be pillaged, without waiting to learn whether many or few of the enemy are near."<sup>1</sup> The insurgents were able to withdraw unharassed because for some days Braddon could not cross the flooded Kasai. However, by 19 August he was across and had reached Chakaltor, 14 miles north of Barabazar. There he had his first brush with Ganga Narain.<sup>2</sup> It was a slight affair, and a night attack by Braddon was foiled by Ganga Narain's flight to Sagma, to the south-west. A party of the levy with a body of ghatwals and their men was pushed on and catching up with him at Sagma inflicted some losses, though Ganga Narain and his sardars escaped.<sup>3</sup>

Encouraged by the result of this affair, Braddon continued to exert himself personally in the disturbed areas of the Jungle Mahals. He was particularly pleased that the irregulars of the Levy and the ghatwali forces had defeated Ganga Narain, for he was anxious to show the well-disposed in the area that it did not need regular troops to deal with him. He had also been careful to ensure that the Government forces did not plunder or make reprisals, and he was very optimistic about re-establishing the authority of the Government in this area, though he admitted that the hilly and jungly nature of the area and the favourable attitude of the zamindars towards the insurgents were formidable

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1. Letter from Jungle Mahals, 15 Aug. 1832, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 25 Aug. 1832.
  2. Braddon to Govt., 19 Aug. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. Braddon to Govt., 22 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

obstacles.<sup>1</sup>

Several of the inferior ghatwali stations were re-established in Barabhum and Kasipur parganas. The eldest son of the Barabhum raja was put in possession of the town of Barabazar and the open country around it. Some of the delinquents were seized. Moreover, a thana was established at Balrampur with the help of the followers of the Sardar Ghatwal of Tinsaya who had deserted the rebels. All these gave strength to the young raja and prevented incursions into Pachet.<sup>2</sup>

But while Ganga Narain was being defeated and the north-western Jungle Mahals pacified, his lieutenant Raghu Nath Singh continued to keep the south in turmoil.<sup>3</sup> The daroga sent to Dhalbhum with 40 musketeers had driven him off from Narsing-garh, but he could do nothing further because of the inactivity or disloyalty of the Dhalbhum raja. Moreover, D'oyly's plans to re-inforce Daroga Nitai Singh with regulars was defeated by the weather. He had written to the Cuttack Commissioner, "With thirty regulars and thirty provincials at Nursinghur the town would be quite safe and there is reason to believe that such a force would drive the chooars away from the surrounding villages and it then would be quite practicable to send Neetye Singh [the Daroga] with

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1. Braddon to Govt., 24 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

2. Braddon to Govt., 6 Sept. 1832, Ibid.

3. Raipur, Shamsundarpur and Silda were disturbed. D'oyly to Hunter, 23 Aug. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

his remaining 60 muskets and as many pikes [paiks] as he could collect to Huldeepookur,"<sup>1</sup> but when Col. Doveton ordered out a relief party they were unable to cross the flooded Subernarekha.<sup>2</sup>

The Jungle Mahals remained comparatively calm due to the 'active and spirited exertions'<sup>3</sup> of the Burdwan commissioners. The circulation of his proclamation in Barabhum, "inviting and requiring the inhabitants of that Pergunnah to come forward and acknowledge him [the eldest son of the raja] as his [the raja's] representative, and explaining to them that it was neither the wish nor intention of Government to visit with severity the conduct of those persons who had not been concerned in any of the more flagrant acts of violence and atrocity committed by the Insurgents, but might have been induced to join them by motives of fear, or from deference to the orders of their leaders and assuring them therefore of pardon, upon condition of their coming in immediately to my camp, or to Barabazar, and of their being handsomely rewarded if they would seize and bring in any of the principal offenders, and finally warning them, that if they failed to take advantage of the present requisition, they would render themselves liable to exemplary punishment," produced a salutary effect, the people gained some confidence and they

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1. Ibid.

2. D'oyly to Hunter, 3 Sept. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

3. Govt. to Braddon, 4 Sept. 1832, Ibid.



began to flock to the young raja at Barabazar.<sup>1</sup>

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Of course, minor skirmishes continued in this period too. For example, Ganga Narain once tried to dislodge the young raja from Barabazar and twice did he attack the Government forces (composed of the Levy, matchlockmen and ghatwals) which had gone to reinstate the former ghatwal of Tinsaya.<sup>2</sup> But the insurgents were repulsed on each occasion with some casualties. Again, the insurgents were chased for three to four hours and thirteen of them were killed and fifteen wounded when they had an encounter with the force headed by the Patkum raja with two police darogas at Adhardi (Aryadih?)<sup>3</sup>. The Levy forces operating further south at Ambikanagar also achieved some successes, as in the defeat of an insurgent force by Jamadar Zalim Singh at Balrampur on 14 September.<sup>4</sup>

The successes were unfortunately not conclusive. Towards the end of September Bahadur Singh of Koilapal, aided by chuars of Dampara, attacked the Levy at Ambikanagar and forced it back upon Supur - the ghatwals who should have aided it joining the insurgents instead.<sup>5</sup> On the Midnapur borders Raghu Nath Singh<sup>6</sup> continued his depredations in Silda and Ghatshila. Further south still there were disturbances in Dhakenal, one of the tributary estates of Orissa, in

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1. Braddon to Govt., 6 Sept. 1832, Para.1, Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.5.

3. Calcutta Courier, 19 Sept. 1832, Editorial column.

4. Francis to Braddon, 15 Sept. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.

5. Russell to Braddon, 22 Sept. 1832, Ibid.

6. Hunter to Govt., 11 Sept. 1832, B.C.1501/58887. The Midnapur authorities, with the approval of the Government, offered a reward of Rs.1,000 for the apprehension of Raghu Nath. Govt. to Hunter, 18 Sept. 1832, Ibid.

which as W.Wilkinson, the Cuttack collector reported, the paiks and other fighting inhabitants had joined.<sup>1</sup>

Early in October, when Bahadur Singh's chuars again plundered Ankro, despite a defensive action by the Raja of Manbhum's forces, Braddon prepared to act on a large scale.<sup>2</sup> He sent a hundred matchlockmen to Manbhum, and posted a party of jail barkandazes at Raipur. Then his health broke down, and the commissioner had to be replaced as the directing authority by the Joint Commissioners of Chota-Nagpur, W.Dent and T.Wilkinson. They took over on 7 October with the powers of a magistrate and superintendent of police. Russell was placed under their orders and Martin was appointed their head assistant.<sup>3</sup> As soon as Dent had had a chance to visit Calcutta to ascertain the views of the Government, the troop movements initiated by Braddon - were renewed. Martin advanced to Chakaltor with two companies of the 50th,<sup>4</sup> while Francis was relieved as commander of the Levy by an Ensign Alexander. At the same time other regular troops of the 38th under Subadar Mangal Singh, advanced from Midnapur to Dhalbhum.<sup>5</sup> A week later, moreover, plans were laid by the Cuttack commissioner to deal with the Larka Kols disturbances in the Dhakanal, Bamanghati and Mayurbhanj tributary mahals by despatching the detachment of the 47th at Cuttack to

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1. W.Wilkinson Acting Cuttack Collector, to Hunter, 31 Oct. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.
  2. Russell to Jt.Commissioners, 11 Nov. 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Braddon to Govt., 15 Oct. 1832, Ibid.
  3. Govt. to Braddon, 2 Oct. 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Govt. to Dent., 16 Oct. 1832, Ibid.
  4. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 22 Oct. 1832, Para.3, Ibid.
  5. Transl.Report, Mangal Singh Subadar, 29 Oct. 1832, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 6 Nov. 1832, B.C.1503/58902.

Dhakenal, and part of the 34th at Nasing-garh to Balasore.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time as these piece-meal moves were being made, Dent had made efforts to secure a peaceful settlement by issuing another proclamation of full pardon to all except the ringleaders, on condition that the insurgents assisted in the seizure of the ringleaders.<sup>2</sup> These efforts failed, and a series of clashes occurred between Subadar Mangal Singh of the 38th and the insurgents, who were beaten back with minor losses first from near Narsing-garh, then from Kalkapur, further to the south-west and then from the Haldipokhar pass, still further to the west.<sup>3</sup>

These clashes were but the precursors of more concerted operations planned by the joint commissioners now that a more favourable season had arrived. To support the military force the Magistrate of Midnapur was asked to join the troops marching into Dhalbhum,<sup>4</sup> while the joint commissioners' hand was strengthened by the appointment of Lt. Ouseley as an assistant to them, with an enlarged native staff. An extra line of dak runners was called for from Bankura to Chakaltor,<sup>5</sup> and considerable supplies of ammunition

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1. Hunter to Govt., 3 Nov. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.  
Also see Hunter to Wilkinson, 1 Nov. 1832, Ibid.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 22 Oct. 1832, Para.3 Ibid.
  3. Transl. Report, Mangal Singh Subadar, 29 Oct. 1832,  
Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 6 Nov. 1832, B.C.1503/  
58902.
  4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 12 Nov. 1832, Ibid.
  5. G.Cheap, Deputy Post Master, Bankura, to Jt. Commissioners,  
6 Nov. 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Dent to Govt., 9 Nov. 1832, Ibid.  
Also Govt. to Dent, 20 Nov. 1832, Ibid.

were sent up to Alexander and the Bankura Levy, Regular troops from outside the area were also mobilised: both the 34th, at Barackpur, and the 24th at Benares were ordered to march to Bankura<sup>1</sup>. In total the force assembled was "three Regiments of Infantry and 8 pieces of ordinance" for the 50th under Major Blackall, except for the two companies at Chakaltor, was also to close on Bankura.<sup>1</sup> With the Levy under Alexander other local forces raised by the civil authorities, and a detachment of the 5th Local Horse from Malwa,<sup>2</sup> there was a very formidable mobilization of resources.

The Bengal Government had laid down that the insurgent leaders should be induced to surrender, but if they refused, they were to be attacked at once and their strongholds seized.<sup>3</sup> (The Jungle Mahals and Midnapur districts once pacified, the troops would move to the Cuttack tributary mahals to restore order). Dent made his offers of pardon, as has been seen, without success. So, making a list of the ringleaders, he moved to attack.

The first attack, made on 14 November by 139 bayonets of the 50th, 36 swordsmen and matchlockmen of the Levy and 35 ghatwals upon the stronghold of Jirpa Naya "the most influential and daring of the insurgents and the main support of Gunga Narain Singh's party,"<sup>4</sup> was accompanied by

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1. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 13 Nov. 1832, Paras. 3-7. Ibid.
  2. Ibid Para.4.
  3. Ibid. Paras. 9-10.
  4. Dent to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C.1501/58888. K.P.Mitra, 'Insurrection of the Coles,' B.P.P. LXII, gives a wrong date for this attack as well as that of Band-dihi (16-18 Nov.).

Dent himself. The chuars and their leader were not surprised, but their "neat and comfortable dwellings" at Berada were destroyed.

On the 15th Band-dihi, twelve miles south-west of Chakaltar was attacked from the Patkum side by the amin Shaikh Shujaat Ali. The village was destroyed, Ganga Narain's property was plundered, his house reduced to ashes. Two sallies by the rebel leader were both beaten back. This was followed by the destruction of the villages of the two Patkum insurgents, Tulsi Digwar and Berah Singh, with nine others.<sup>1</sup>

Near Barabazar, too, the insurgents were defeated by Jamadar Matadin Tiwari and a party of the Levy, matchlockmen and ghatwals. Bhuni (in the Satrakhani ghat) a post of the insurgents, 4 miles to the south of Barabazar, was burnt and 117 head of cattle were seized and brought away.<sup>2</sup> Thus the simultaneous attacks begun on 14 November on the three important strongholds of the rebel leader proved very successful.<sup>3</sup> Dent renewed his offer of pardon, but this last-minute effort at a peaceful settlement also ended in smoke.<sup>4</sup> Shortly afterwards, worn by months of activity with no chance of a rest first in Chota-Nagpur and now in the Jungla Mahals, Dent was taken ill. At the beginning of December he set off

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1. Transl. Report, Shaikh Shujaat Ali, 17 Nov. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.

2. Dent to Govt., 18 Nov. 1832, Para.6, Ibid.

3. Report in India Gazette, 24 Nov. 1832.

4. Dent to Govt., 18 Nov. 1832, Para.7, B.C.1501/58888.



for Hazaribagh for a change of air, handing over his charge to the other Joint Commissioner, Captain Wilkinson.

The newcomer found that Dent's successes in the North, at Band-dihi and Barabazar, had neither prevented a movement of the Bhumijes to the south, nor broken their spirit. Disquieting reports of renewed plundering poured in from Supur, Ambikanagar, Raipur, Shamsundarpur, and Phulkusma, ~~on~~ right down the route from Barabazar to Midnapur through the Kasai valley.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since mid-November Dent had been hearing that the rebels were shifting their families and the newly harvested grain into arals, or temporary camps in the hills and jungles.<sup>2</sup> It was evident that the same sort of campaign would have to be fought in the Jungle Mahals as had been fought in Chota-Nagpur - a deliberate war to destroy the enemies' supplies and to harass them into surrender. It would be a tedious war, with much marching and counter-marching, skirmishes and ambushes, but no hope of any large, decisive action.

The first task in preparing for such a conflict was to ensure essential supplies - once active operations had begun, there would be no time to look to personal comforts. Supply depôts were therefore prepared, and stocks carried to them by bullock - even on pig back. Boats were arranged for fording the rivers, dak connections strengthened, and

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1. Dent to Govt., 15 Nov. 1832, Ibid.

2. Dent to Govt., 21 Nov. 1832, Ibid.

English and native doctors were brought up to look after the troops and levies.

The troops were then divided into three columns - the 24th Regiment forming the right, the 50th the centre and the 34th the left, each being equipped with guns and supplied with a body of irregulars armed with muskets or matchlocks.<sup>1</sup> Col. Fast of the 24th Regiment N.I. was put in overall command.

Capt. Bird, commanding the right column, marched on 5 December to attack the strongholds of Singh Sardar, Tulsi Digwar and Dina Singh, the insurgent chiefs of Patkum.<sup>2</sup> The passes of the hills on different sides of that pargana were guarded to prevent infiltration or flight of the insurgents. For example, Amin Shujaat Ali was stationed at Kedla, 12 miles east of Inchagarh to guard the pass on the Barabhum side and Anand Singh, the zamindar of Matha pargana to the north-east was put in charge of the passes on that side<sup>3</sup> with a re-inforcement of 50 barkandazes from Dulmi thana, 8½ miles south-east of Inchagarh. One Subadar Singh who had lately distinguished himself in fighting the rebels, also joined Capt. Bird.

However, the chuars could not be surprised, and they even tried to harass the party on its return march. A few shots of the Light infantry, however, silenced them. The

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1. Bengal Hurkaru, 17 Dec. 1832, Editorial Column.

2. Wilkinson to Col. Fast, 3 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.

Also see Capt. Bird to Brigade Major, Jungle Mahals Field Force, N.D., Ibid.

3. Ibid.

arals and the village of Bara Chatarma were completely destroyed.<sup>1</sup> At Chatarma, however, there was a skirmish in which a man and a woman were killed and a woman with a baby and a lad were captured. The captain, however, realized the futility of such 'partial and unmeaning skirmishing', released these helpless prisoners and withdrew his men.<sup>2</sup> Shujaat Ali also was not idle in this period. He sacked Jogilow (Jogit-ala?) and its neighbouring villages. Moreover, the bowmen of the Patkum raja chased some chuars who tried to harass them.

In Barabhum two companies of the centre column under Capt. Johnson, with 60 men of the Levy under Jamadām Matadin and 40 ghatwals under Srikanth Marjia attacked Agui Dangra, the haunt of the chief insurgents of the Satrakhani ghat, some 9 miles from Barabazar. Its chief, Kishan Singh, sudial ghatwal, was one of the proscribed sardars. Johnson was directed by the joint commissioner "to destroy the village and bring from thence as many cattle and families of the insurgents as may be captured."<sup>3</sup> But again the chuars could not be overtaken, though they fired upon the troops from some distance.<sup>4</sup> Six irregulars were wounded and the detachment returned without "having succeeded in the object for which it was detached with the exception of having burned the

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1. 'Miles', camp Chelyama, 16 Nov. 1833, Bengal Hurkaru, 24 Jan. 1833.

2. Bird to Brigade Major, J.M.F.F., N.D., B.C. 1501/58888.

3. Wilkinson to East, 5 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

4. R. Johnson to Blackall, 6 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

village, no chooars or property having been found in it except 5 or 6 bullocks."<sup>1</sup>

In the same night Lt. Trimmer with a party of 2 officers, 4 havildars, 4 naiks and 60 sepoy and 40 men of the Levy under Ensign Alexander attacked an aral about five miles south-east of camp Balrampur. The place was almost deserted; but the houses were destroyed and two insurgents were killed.<sup>2</sup>

Two main drives thus got under way - one involving the centre column in an advance from Balrampur, southwards through Barabazar to Berada,<sup>3</sup> the other involving two companies of the 34th under Lt. Timins marching from Dhadka to Amchuri while the rest of the 34th under Lt. Young closed upon the same objective from further to the west.<sup>4</sup> The two objectives were the strongholds of Ganga Narain in Barabhum and of Raghu Nath Singh in Dhalbhum respectively. Both advances were accompanied by systematic destruction of arals, by skirmishes and raids. The troops in the usual way would "penetrate into the strongholds and fastnesses of the chooars without opposition, burn Arrals and villages, destroy as much grain as is possible and return to camp."<sup>5</sup> For full two months the troops knew no rest. There was no decisive

1. Blackall to Capt. Impey, 6 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

2. F. Trimmer to Impey, 6 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

3. A correspondent, Camp Berada, 19 Dec. 1832, John Bull, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 27 Dec. 1832.

4. Ibid. Also see Lt. W. Young to D'Oyly, 16 Dec. 1832, B.C. 1502/58889.

5. Bird to Impey, 14 Dec. 1832, B.C. 1501/58888.

action worth the name.<sup>1</sup> The tribal people constantly resorted to guerilla tactics. Like wasps or hornets they would try to sting the vanguard or the rearguard of the troops, but as soon as the troops became alert they would fly away into their fastnesses. It was very difficult to overtake or overwhelm them, and the Bhumijes born and bred in the jungles and hills, seemed to know no need of rest.

All through December operations continued. The centre column, operating to the north of Barabazar burnt the villages of Raidihi and Digardi, and destroyed several arals, full of grain.<sup>2</sup> It then moved south-west against Beradi and Berada, burning several further villages, seizing or destroying the grain stores in a number of arals and carrying off cattle. In addition the column, consisting of 434 rank and file with a brigade of six-pounders captured 40 women and five children.<sup>3</sup>

The left wing, forcing its way through the Satrakhani ghat, through the barricades of the chuars, sacked Bansgarh and Churda, and so reached Lakhipur.

The right wing under Timins took Dampara - destroying the chhapars or huts, seizing many cows and oxen, but killing

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1. An officer later on commented, "It would be useless even could I recollect them (...) to enumerate all the petty dours, skirmishes, and burnings that took place, at this time without any satisfactory effect." A Subaltern, 'Sketch of the campaign', East India Journal, No.V, Part I, 476.
  2. W.W.Rees to Impey, 13 Dec. 1832, B.C. 1501/58888.
  3. Fast to Lt.Col. Beatson, Adjutant of the Army, 15 Dec. 1832, Ibid.  
also see Trimmer to Impey, 15 and 16 Dec. 1832, Ibid.



only three rebels.<sup>1</sup> Lt. Young operated in similar fashion from Kalyanpur and the Haldipokhar estate.

The effect of these two drives was first to secure a few submissions by insurgent leaders - as for example those from the Tinsaya taraf and from the Punj-Sardari<sup>2</sup> - and then to push the two main rebel groups towards each other in the centre of the Jungle Mahals. Against them the right column operated from a base at Chelyama, 13 miles south-west of Barabazar, and the centre column from Berada. The troops moved out almost daily to scour the hills and jungles to their south, and destroy villages and arals.<sup>3</sup> The only lull was when Capt. Bird with the right column, ran short of supplies, and the troops had for some days to be set to collecting grain from the arals. (They had to rest content with dhan, coarse, unhusked rice).<sup>4</sup> Thereafter Major Blackall, with the 50th, attacked Sonakhand aral, "where Gunga Narain Sing and some of his principal sirdars had taken up a strong position on the hills."<sup>5</sup> The result was as ever, the escape of the insurgents, the seizure of grain and cattle, some harassing of the rearguard as the troops returned to camp. As a correspondent to John Bull said, all such campaigns were "more or less successful in destroying the stores of grain, burning the villages, and bringing in

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1. G.Timins. to East, 17 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

2. Wilkinson to Govt., 16 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

3. J.Bird to Impey, 16 and 18 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

4. Bird to Impey, 20 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

5. Blackall to Impey, 18 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

herds of cattle, etc., the produce of the chooar's incursions during the rains," but the insurgents were "too tenacious of their lives, and too well aware of the best means of preserving them by keeping close in the creeks and corners of the hills and jungles."<sup>1</sup> From the south the left column, despite serious sickness in the camp, pushed equally hard. On 20 December Captain Wheler attacked Khunia, and next day Capt. Croft attacked Goghi Barul, killing and wounding a number of chuars, destroying many huts and grain stores.<sup>2</sup> Further sweeps were made on the 26th with equal success. By the end of December Ganga Narain and the other principal insurgents had been driven from the more open country into the Dalma Hills.

The operations had not been without loss to the British forces, though the losses had never been heavy: a havildar of the 50th wounded on 13 December,<sup>3</sup> officers and sepoy wounded by the "invisible enemy" on the 20th,<sup>4</sup> three more of the left column on the 26th,<sup>5</sup> Turnbull, adjutant of the 24th, killed on 1 January.<sup>6</sup> But the strain was continuous. The country was often very difficult, the jungle dense

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1. A Correspondent, Berada Camp, 19 Dec. 1832, John Bull, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 27 Dec. 1832.
  2. J.G.Croft to Impey, 20 and 21 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.
  3. Fast to Col. Beatson, 15 Dec. 1832, Ibid.
  4. Bird to Impey, 20 Dec. 1832, Ibid.
  5. Croft to Impey, 26 Dec. 1832, Ibid.
  6. A Subaltern, op.cit. 477: "This day afforded a good specimen of jungle fighting, for 'the iron flew, from bended yew', in whole showers, and yet not a man was visible. Crouched amid the bamboos on each side of the rocky dell, they sent with impunity 'their arrowy fleet' among their opponents, who could not return the fire with any success."

there were stockades to be cleared and a constant danger of surprise. As a result the exasperated troops gave ever freer rein to the worst tendencies of the human heart, destroying and pillaging ruthlessly. There was also for a while the risk of cholera to be faced, though the main victims of the outbreak in the Lakhipur camp of the 34th were the ill-disciplined, ill-cared for, badly dressed camp followers.<sup>1</sup> (They were the main victims also of the chuar attacks as they went out foraging, or lagged behind advancing columns.)

At times the officer almost despaired of adapting the troops to the unfamiliar form of warfare and certainly despaired of seeing an end to the operations. Captain Bird, writing on 20 December, when Lt. Spry, a native doctor and sepoy Gauri Shankar, Shaikh Pir Bakaha, Diwan Khan and Sheo Dayal Misra had been severely wounded, and a havildar, two naiks and several sepoy slightly wounded,<sup>2</sup> said "regular troops are in a country like this, placed most completely at the mercy of the chooars who, screened by the thick jungle and quite protected by precipitous hills, engage at comparatively little or no risk to themselves, whilst the troops rendered conspicuous by their dress and compact order, offer a fair mark without being able to return a fire with any certain effect."<sup>3</sup> Though a great deal of damage was done to the property of the insurgents, their spirit remained

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1. Dr.R. Tytter to Impey, 21 Dec. 1832, Ibid.

2. Report, Dr.H.A.Bruce, 20 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888. Also see A Subaltern, op,cit. 477: The chuars "kept up a heavy fire of arrows on the approaching column."

3. Bird to Impey, 20 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.

unbroken, because they so rarely suffered loss in personnel: "it is seldom that any party can take them by surprize, they get notice of our approach, separate, and conceal themselves in the holes and caverns of the thick jungles until our return towards camp, when they creep out to take a sly shot at the rear column."<sup>1</sup> Another correspondent even wrote, "Most probably we are further off from our object [of catching Ganga Narain] than ever, for every dour that we have hitherto made has only proved to him the strength of the jungles .....In fact the regular troops are quite unfit for this irregular warfare."<sup>2</sup>

Such complete despair was perhaps scarcely called for; the operations had already, in fact, driven the chuars into an ever smaller area of the hills, and Ganga Narain had several narrow escapes from capture. He had been driven from Kukru Kucha in Bird's attack of 20 December, to which he had retreated, with heavy loss in supplies, after being attacked on the 17th at Sonakhand. On 28 December Capt. Griffin attacked Ghora Banda, and though once again Ganga Narain escaped, his hut and personal possessions were taken, including a silver mounted huggah, and much clothing and cooking

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1. Anonymous letter, Camp Amjo, 2 Jan. 1833, John Bull, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 11 Jan. 1833.
  2. 'Miles', Camp Chelyama, 16 Jan. 1833, Bengal Hurkaru, 24 Jan. 1833. In the words of an officer who fought here, "The same desultory fighting continued on every side, where the troops were stationed. Parties were daily out to attack Kochas or surprise small parties of the Insurgents, but it was of no avail, as Gunga Narain himself still escaped their stratagems:" A Subaltern, op.cit.477.

equipments.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, under the repeated attacks of the troops a number of his leading followers were giving way. On 27 December, Kadamjore and Kaljore (Ratanjare), the strongholds of Nabbu Digwar, who had already made tentative signs of surrendering, were stormed and sacked by Captain Wilson and Shujaat Ali.<sup>2</sup> "The stirring up Nubboo Digwar got," led to the surrender of Govind Digwar<sup>3</sup> of Toan Kocha.

"We are," wrote Capt. Wilkinson to Major Benson, the private secretary of the Governor General in a private letter, "now close under Dulma, with Bareeda hills to our rear. Yesterday's work has so alarmed Annund Deegwar & Jirpa, that at 8 last night they sent me one[word] they would seize & bring in Gunga Narain. I told them to do so by 12 o'clock today, as our work must proceed little faith can be put in the rascals but we shall see what they will do."<sup>4</sup> Nothing happened of this promise and on the same day (after the appointed hour) a twin attack was launched upon Kocha and Neota Kocha,<sup>5</sup> and on the following day Lt. Hampton and the Levy destroyed what was left of Bandi (Band-dihi) and Danbira near Amjor.<sup>6</sup> On 3 January a son of Anand Digwar was

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1. Griffin to Lt. Turnbull, Adjutant, 28 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888. Also see Wilkinson to Major Benson, Private secy. Lord Bentinck, 29 Dec. 1832, Bentinck MS., Box 23.
  2. Ibid. Also see Bird to Impey, 27 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888. At Kadamjore a body of chuars were surprised with much loss.
  3. Wilkinson to Benson, 29 Dec. 1833, Bentinck MS., Box. 23.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Fast to Lt.Col. Beatson, 30 Dec. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.
  6. Lt. Hampton to Impey, 31 Dec. 1832, Ibid.



taken in a most successful attack upon the arals of Jirpa Naya and Anand Digwar, just to the east of Chelyama.

For most of January the whole of the Jungle Mahals field force concentrated their attacks upon the Dalma Hills. The left column had reached Ramgarh, south-east of Chelyama, and close to the Singhbhum borders and of the Dalma range on 18 January.<sup>1</sup> The centre column, with a detachment of the 50th under Captain Johnson then arrived at Amjor, on the Barabhum skirt of the Dalma Hills on the 19th.<sup>2</sup> From these two bases the hills were ravaged day after day, arals being burned, small parties of chuars driven through the hills, and their women and children, cattle and household goods carried off. The right column then joined in from near Dagu Kocha,<sup>3</sup> while Alexander and the Levy operated further to the north-east in the Ambikanagar area.<sup>4</sup>

From 23 January five parties from the various columns commenced a drive. A detachment consisting of four companies of the 50th Regiment N.I. two companies of the 24th, two from the 34th and 160 men of the Bankura Levy with about 300 ghatwals attached, took part under the overall

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1. Griffin to Impey, 20 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.

2. Hampton to Impey, 22 Jan. 1833, Ibid.

3. Bird to Inpey, 22 Jan. 1833, Ibid.

4. Ensign Alexander to Impey, 29 Jan. 1833, Ibid. The Levy suffered its most serious reverse on 22 January when Jamadar Kale Khan, who had been left with a party at Ambikanagar lost six men, with fifteen of the Levy, and two ghatwals wounded. Wilkinson to Benson, 25 Jan. 1833, Bentinck MS., Box 23. Also see Wilkinson to Govt., 29 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.

command of Capt. Johnson.<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson wrote in a private letter on the 23rd, "I have this morning had parties sent out from all our positions, to occupy posts round a place in the hills called Burra Jerrea, they will remain out three days & return on the 4th, sending out half of their men daily in search of Gunga; at the same time young Alexander with 150 of the Levy & 350 ghatwals will search in the hills & jungles in every direction. Most earnestly do I hope that their exertions will be attended with success, for no officers or men would go to the work with a better will although it is harassing in the extreme. Large quantities of grain have been destroyed in the hills & many cattle brought out of them, which will I hope soon bring those unfortunate wretches to a proper sense of their duty..... The hills are very strong & covered with jungle & high grass, & our enemies can be found with difficulty."<sup>2</sup>

On the first day Lt. Sharpe with two companies of the 24th ascended the hills, destroyed arals and siezed arms and cattle.<sup>3</sup> On the second Capt. Johnson with the main part of the 50th, destroyed arals full of grain and seized arms

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1. Johnson to Impey, 27 Jan. 1833. Ibid. Also see a Private Letter, Disturbed districts, 24 Jan. 1833, India Gazette, 31 Jan. 1833. Also see Wilkinson to Benson, 25 Jan. 1833, Bentinck MS. Box 23: The columns operated from a post south of the Dalma Hills, from Tumolu, "some six miles further to the west, at Ramghur, half way between the Dulma & Suburnreeka [sic], distant from both less than two miles."
  2. Wilkinson to Benson, 23 Jan. 1833, Bentinck MS., Box 23. He also wished he could meet the Governor General at Hazaribagh but for his preoccupation, but he hoped that Dent would explain the state of affairs properly.
  3. Sharpe to Johnson, 27 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.

on the opposite side of the Dalma range.<sup>1</sup> On the same day Sharpe captured a woman and six children. A subadar of the detachment of the 24th also had a skirmish with the chuars, after which three women and one child were captured.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander's Levy, which had returned from Ambikanagar, operated on this day in three parties, scouring the hills opposite Dalma, burning arals, capturing women and children and seizing arms.<sup>3</sup> On the same day the two other parties from the left column, consisting of 100 sepoy each, under Captains Croft and Wheler, marched to Goi Ram's aral and Tamak-patur. They burnt Bhota, killed a sardar chuar and wounded many of his followers.<sup>4</sup>

Intensive operations on the fullest scale possible were continued until the 28th. Every day arals were burnt,

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1. Johnson to Impey, 27 Jan. 1833, Ibid.
  2. Lt. Hannington to Griffin, 27 Jan. 1833, Ibid.  
Also see Griffin to Impey, 24 Jan. 1833, Ibid.
  3. Alexander to Wilkinson, 28 Jan. 1833, Ibid.  
Also see Alexander to Johnson, 28 Jan. 1833, Ibid.
  4. Lt.Col. Cooper to Impey, 26 Jan. 1833, Ibid.

grain taken from hidden stores, women and children captured.<sup>1</sup> (The destruction of villages was stopped because of the orders of the Governor-General, though Wilkinson believed that some of the chuars of Tinsaya and Punj-Sardari had surrendered only after many villages had been burnt and after they had given the insurgents no rest in their arrals<sup>2</sup>.) But though they all but came up with Ganga Narain, following the hoof-marks of his pony, and attempting to surround him when news came in of his presence at Phuljhar, north of Ghatshila, all they actually got their hands on were some of his papers and his pony. A very great deal of the property was destroyed, but the wanted men escaped. As Johnson wrote the country "presents every obstacle to the movement of our

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1. Meanwhile the following instructions were given to the commanding officers on the basis of Major Benson's note to Dent of 10 January: "The Governor General wishes that no villages should be destroyed, or rather that as little injury should be done to the country as possible, thinking it upon the whole impolitic." But while Wilkinson prohibited "the burning or destruction of villages, or destruction of cultivation," he explicitly mentioned, "this prohibition does not of course apply to the temporary arrals of the choars, or the grain which they have collected in or near them with a view of subsisting themselves, whilst in open rebellion against the Government." Wilkinson also frankly wrote to the private secretary of Lord Bentinck, "We have hitherto destroyed and carried away all the grain found in the hills, & brought in the cattle. This course I propose continuing unless it may be considered objectionable, as the best [means] to distress the insurgents, as there is utmost difficulty in our coming on them by surprise." But at the same time he asked his friend, "Pray let me know what Lord Wm's [William Bentinck's] wishes are, regarding the manner in which we should proceed that I may not run counter." Wilkinson to Benson, 25 Jan. 1833, Bentinck MS., Box 23.

2. Ibid.

troops, while it affords every facility of escape and concealment to the chuars..., it is impossible to overtake them, unincumbered as they are, and possessing the double advantage of a perfect knowledge of the ground and long habit of moving over such ground with celerity."<sup>1</sup>

The troops, by their concerted drives, and by bivouacking in the Dalma Hills themselves for days on end so as to leave no part unguarded day or night, had put the insurgents in great straits. The hills were traversed in every direction and the insurgents were deprived of their grain and every other necessary of life.<sup>2</sup> Their losses, after the whole available British force, regular and irregular had been poured into the one area of south Barabhum, undoubtedly were very high. Yet still the invisible enemy showed no sign of relinquishing his sanguinary struggle, and continued to defy the whole British strength in the Jungle Mahals. Worse still, their example of resistance led to disturbances in Singhbhum where the Larka Kols of the Kolhan under their turbulent leaders were active in undertaking raids in the neighbouring areas, and more particularly in taking sides in the dispute between the Bamanghati zamindar and his overlord the Raja of Mayurbhanj on the one hand and between the Raja of

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1. Johnson to Impey, 28 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.

2. According to a military officer, "the exertions of the officers and men of the scouring parties had made the whole range of hills too hot to hold Gunga Narain and his followers." A Subaltern, op.cit. 478.



Porahat and the chiefs of Saraikela and Kharsawan on the other.<sup>1</sup>

When, however, the crack in the insurgents' morale came, it was amongst the southern group that it first appeared. While the Dalma Hills were being scoured, Lt. Timins, with the 34th, was busy in Dhalbhum.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded, in the main, in inflicting rather heavier casualties on the enemy than the northern forces had - seven in the Kaniarota hills on 27 January, another six or seven at Kamalpur on the 30th, five more and a number of persons on 2 February, and so on. More important still, a number of the leaders were killed or seized. Manjhi was killed in the attacks on Gardi Munda's posts north of Haldipokhar, Madan Muxari was captured on 2 February and from 5 February first Gardi Munda's stronghold of Larjhorī was taken, with one of his sons, cousin and various servants, then his eldest son surrendered and his wife was captured, and finally on the 8th

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1. Bindrai was the ringleader of the Larkas of north Singhbhum, and the chiefs of Porahat, Saraikela and Singhbhum trembled with fear at the mere mention of the name of this Rob Roy. These chiefs had been threatened one by one that "if you send for the Sahib (English) or go for him, your ~~ghur~~ (house) or villages will not remain, and you shall yourself be killed:" Petition, Raja Achet Singh of Porahat to Wilkinson, 22 Oct. 1832, B.C.1503/58902. Also see Wilkinson to Govt., 31 Oct. 1832, Ibid. Again, Bindrai, Khandu Pater and other Larkas burned ten villages of Kharsawan in December 1832. (Wilkinson to Govt., 26 Dec. 1832, Ibid.) Wilkinson repeatedly requested the Government to permit him to attack the Larkas, (Memorandum, Wilkinson, 1 March 1833, B.C.1502/58889). but the latter, after the sad experience of the Jungle Mahals, did not like to undertake such a difficult task.: Govt. to Wilkinson, 31 Dec. 1832, B.C.1503/58903; Govt., to Wilkinson, 28 Jan. 1833, Para.4, B.C.1503/58904. Also see Pol. Letter to Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 13 March 1834. B.C.1503/58906.

2. Timins to Impey, 10 Feb. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.

Gardi Munda himself surrendered. "These three chief Sirdars", wrote Timins, "ought never to be allowed to be at large again in my opinion. They were (particularly Gadie Moonda) as influential in producing rebellion as Gunga Narain Sing. They have burnt villages, destroyed property and laid waste the country in the neighbourhood of my camp."<sup>1</sup>

This considerable success was followed up by even more vigorous drives against rebel strongholds, and at last matters began to take, for the Company, a more favourable turn. Captain Wilkinson, using his knowledge and experience of the tribal folk of this area, and probably also of the Bhils of south India, began to win over certain of the chiefs by timely bribes. A number of them, such as Bikal Sardar and Gambhir Singh<sup>2</sup> joined the joint commissioner as guides, with a consequent increase in the efficiency of the troops' movements. "The sight of coin", Captain Griffin wrote, "has excited their zeal and they will prove themselves all I can wish."<sup>3</sup> Many of the officers still doubted,

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1. Ibid. Other chiefs who submitted this day were Ramoa, Asman sardar, Hango, Murga Koon Digwar, Ram Sardar, and others.
  2. Wilkinson to Govt., 30 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58889. Bahadur Singh had already been working with Capt. Wilkinson since the beginning of the first phase of the unrest, and he had become one of the favourites.
  3. Quoted in Wilkinson to Govt. 30 Jan 1833, B.C. 1502/58889. The accession of reliable guides was very welcome for Gunga Narain had caused many spies to desert by killing any such, even women, who fell into his hand: "The difficulty of obtaining correct information is great, and has been lately much increased by three men of the Intelligence department having been murdered and three confined by Gunga Narain's followers": Wilkinson to Govt., 30 Jan. 1832. Ibid.

however, whether Ganga Narain could be taken, though the troops, as one said, had become "very successful in surmounting steep precipices such as our troops never scaled before",<sup>1</sup> and others were finding the constant work of destruction increasingly distasteful, and could not but feel "some degree of pity for these poor, superstitious and misguided men, whom we are hunting like wild beasts."<sup>2</sup> And then, quite unexpectedly news came in, on 7 February that Ganga Narain was dead. He had fled to Singhbhum to seek the aid of the Larka Kols, and on the way had been killed, not by British troops as some writers boasted,<sup>3</sup> nor by any traitor among his followers but by the forces of Thakur Chetan Singh of Kharsawan, at his thana of Hindusahar.<sup>4</sup>

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1. 'Miles', Camp Timolia, 30 Jan. 1833, Bengal Hurkaru 9 Feb. 1833.
  2. Report from Camp Amjor, 30 Jan. 1833, India Gazette, 6 Feb. 1833.
  3. Bengal & Agra Annual Guide and Register, 1841, II, 36.
  4. According to an officer who fought here, "Gunga Narain - deserted by almost all his followers - of whom some were killed and many had submitted or been taken prisoner - fled to Singhboom and endeavoured to rouse the Coles to join him. To this they would not agree unless they had a specimen of his talents as a leader, and they proposed an attack upon Thakoor Cheytun Sing's estate ... "One of his Namhatas or personal servants, subsequently taken, mentioned the particulars as follows: - 'That on the attack being made ..., the Thakoor's forces repulsed them, and that Gunganarain who was already hit with two arrows, endeavoured to run away across a gram field. That he was pursued and overtaken by Cheytun Sing's barber who sprung on him and held him to the ground, while some of his friends cut his head off.'"

The news was so unexpected, so much a bolt from the blue, that the thakur was at pains to have as many people as possible identify the body before he sent the news to the joint commissioner.<sup>1</sup> His message was followed by the severed head of the rebel which was identified in camp by Ganga Narain's son-in-law, several other relatives and at least a hundred other individuals. The thakur, three of whose men had been killed and 30 men and horses wounded, wrote to the commissioner for the promised reward, and for adequate protection of his person and property.<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson, expressing his sense of relief, thought the thakur entitled to the reward of Rs.5,000, though he admitted that the intensive operations since 19 January had been indirectly responsible for the consummation of this object.<sup>3</sup>

Operations had still to be continued for some time to secure the capture or surrender of the other chief insurgents. But the announcement of Ganga Narain's death had a demoralising effect upon all of them, and the Punj- Sardari rebels (except for Jirpa Naya), and those of Satrakhani surrendered.<sup>4</sup> The success of Lt. Timins in the direction of

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1. Chetan Singh to Wilkinson, 7 Feb. 1833, B.C.1502/58889. "The Thikur had the pleasure of sending his head to Captain Wilkinson, with a letter quite in the style of Falstaff when after the battle near Shrewsbury, he said, 'there is Percy. If your father will do me any honor so; if not, let him kill the next Percy himself. I look to be either Earl or Duke'. Dalton, Ethnology, 175.
  2. Chetan Singh to Wilkinson, 7 Feb. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.
  3. Wilkinson to Govt., 10 Feb. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.
  4. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 15 Feb. 1833, Ibid.

Kaljanpur and Haldipokhar led to the submission of many rebel chiefs in that pocket.<sup>1</sup> Yet another turbulent chief was seized by the Dhalbhum raja north of Narsinggarh in the vicinity of Dampara. Tulsi Digwar, the insurgent chief of Patkum who had taken Ganga Narain to Singhbhum, died of wounds, Raghu Nath Singh, the Dampara chief, for whose apprehension a reward had been announced, was taken on 19 February, "by the craft of a Brahmin while Lal Sardar, another proscribed sardar, was, with his son, seized on the same day, "by some ghatwals in water."<sup>2</sup>

At last it became possible for the joint commissioners to plan the dispersal of the forces collected under their command. Two regiments they suggested might be sent forthwith to Tamar, Singhbhum and other disturbed quarters.<sup>3</sup>

While Wilkinson was in Calcutta, mopping up operations continued. On 16 February Kosi was attacked, and after losing 23 men, Surar Sardar submitted. Three days later Mauldia, a stronghold in the hills in the Bamanghati estate was attacked.<sup>4</sup> Thirty two dead bodies were counted, and

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1. Timins to Impey, 10 and 17 Feb. 1833, Ibid.
  2. Wilkinson to Benson, 21 Feb. 1833, Bentinck MS.Box.23: only Durup Kahar and Kishan Singh of Satrakhani now remained at large. With the apprehension of Raghu Nath, no focus of resistance remained in Dhalbhum and other sardars surrendered and took the oath of allegiance before Lt.Col.Cooper, the commander of the left column:- Cooper to Impey, 4 March 1833, B.C.1502/58890.
  3. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 15 Feb.1833, B.C.1502/58889. The troops did go to Singhbhum and Tamar, but the disputes were settled by arbitration: See Wilkinson to Govt., 2 Apl.1833, B.C.1502/58890. Also see Govt. to Wilkinson, 6 Apl.1833, Ibid. Also Wilkinson to Fast, 20 Apl.1833, Ibid. Also Wilkinson to Govt., 20 Apl. 1833, Ibid.
  4. Timins to Impey, 17 Feb. 1833, Ibid. The insurgents had taken refuge there.



further sardars<sup>1</sup> submitted and bound themselves not to chuar again. Those chiefs who were still at large were now fugitives rather than effective rebels. "Several of the insurgent chiefs are still abroad," wrote a correspondent of the India Gazette, "but attended only by their respective families. Attempts are still being made to lay hold of Tirpaniah [Jirpa Naya] and one or two others, but I think it is of little consequence whether they are caught or not, as they have had too severe a lesson lately as to our mode of punishing offenders ever to trouble the country again."<sup>2</sup>

There was great rejoicing in the camps at the death of Ganga Narain and seizure of Raghu Nath Singh and the prospect of a return to cantonment - a rejoicing which turned to bitter complaint when it was realised that there was still work to be done in Singhbhum and the Cuttack tributary Mahals. The newspapers for March and April were full of angry comments of the officers detained in those disturbed areas through the hot weather, with prospects even of further work in the rains.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Some of the sardars who had submitted by 20 February were Gopal, Kalyan, Mada, Binu, Karji, Tuhar, Buru, Ram, Surar, Mataru, Juli, Rup Singh, Lakhan, Bahadur, Pura, Senru, Daraga, Puran, Madan, Gop and Nagga. Another batch submitted by 9 March: Timins to Impey, 2 March 1833, B.C.1502/58890.
  2. Report from field force, 21 Feb. 1833, India Gazette, 25 Feb. 1833.
  3. 'Silex', Bankura, 24 March 1833, Bengal Hurkaru, 28 March 1833. Also see An officer, J.M.F.F., Camp Chelyama, 30 March, John Bull, Quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 5 Apl. 1833.  
Also 'A convalescent', Bengal Hurkaru, 20 Apl. 1833.

It was indeed hard upon the troops, especially the 50th which had borne the burden of a campaign in Chota-Nagpur before being sent into the Jungla Mahals. A number of promising officers had fallen to the chuars, or became a prey to exertion and an unhealthy climate - the saddest loss of all, perhaps, being that of Ensign Alexander who died right at the end of the campaign with his Bankura Levy, on 25 March. As Dent said, the Government "lost in this young man an officer of considerable promise and one who during the late campaign displayed a zeal and activity highly to his credit."<sup>1</sup> The sickness among the sepoys had also been heavy, especially in the 34th which had been hard-hit by cholera.

The burden borne by the Company was no light one either. An officer, writing under the pseudonym 'John Kol' to the Indian Gazette, had pointed out the absurdity of Government's keeping three regiments in the field, with their appropriate establishments, at a cost of about Rs.25,000 a month when the whole revenue of the district barely amounted to Rs. 8,000 - even if the zamindars did not secure a relief from revenue demand as compensation for their losses.<sup>2</sup> Quite apart from these regular outgoings, there had been a contingent bill of Rs.3,815 charged upon and sanctioned by the

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1. Dent to Govt., 27 March 1833, B.C.1502/58890.

2. 'John Kol', Disturbed districts, N.D. Bengal Hurkaru, 16 Feb. 1832.

Government for extra establishments of barkandazes and other miscellaneous items for the months August 1832 to January 1833 for the protection of the western frontier of Midnapur alone.<sup>1</sup> Then Commissioner Braddon had incurred expenses attendant on the disturbances in the Jungla Mahals amounting to Rs. 22,511<sup>2</sup> and from November 1832 to April 1833 the joint commissioners, who took over from Braddon, had incurred a further expenditure of Rs. 28,715.<sup>3</sup> Though the detailed items show how very cheap carriage, foodstuffs and the wages of native employees were, the total, when added to the salaries allowances etc. of the military and civilians engaged in the campaign, was quite formidable.

Moreover, though, as Wilson points out, the campaign was from the military point of view a very minor affair<sup>4</sup> of skirmishes with tribesmen armed only with bows, arrows, and axes, in point of destructiveness it was a very full scale one. Thousands of acres were laid waste, thousands of houses and huts were destroyed. Great quantities of grain were seized, scattered or burnt, so that even seed grain was not available in some areas after pacification had been completed. No effort was at any time made to preserve stocks for sowing against a return to normality. Similarly cows, bullocks, goats and sheep were always seized when a village

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1. Hunter to Govt., 5 Feb. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.

2. Russell to Braddon, High Commissioner, 29 May 1833, B.C.1502/58890.

3. Dent to Govt., 6 July 1833, B.C.1502/58890.

4. Wilson, Mill's History of India, 1858, IIX, 238.

or aral was attacked. Most of them were sold, and the proceeds distributed among the troops.<sup>1</sup> When Wilkinson enquired from the Calcutta authorities whether he should permit this, he was told that he should exercise his own discretion in the matter, though he might restore cattle to their real owners, if they had not been concerned in the insurrection. The loss of working cattle was necessarily a serious blow to the whole agricultural economy.<sup>2</sup>

Initially the losses in killed and wounded among the insurgents do not seem to have been heavy: it was only twice or thrice that the chuars directly attacked the troops. During the rains, when the regulars were withdrawn, the levies, thana police and barkandazes, not heavily armed and largely inactive, inflicted little loss. But in the later operations, such as those in the Dalma Hills, when large bodies of regulars, with supporting six-pounders, were employed losses grew heavier. (Nor, it may be supposed, did the troops always discriminate between the peaceable and hostile villagers). Bhumij casualties must certainly have run into thousands.

1. Wilkinson to Govt., 27 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58889.
2. A number of Bengal newspapers were roused to protest against the wholesale destruction of villages and crops, but in such country, and operations against a people so recklessly intent upon vengeance upon all outsiders the Government argument that no other methods were open to them, was not implausible.

CHAPTER VI.The Origins of the Unrest in the Jungle Mahals  
and Dhalbhum.

The risings in the Jungle Mahals and Dhalbhum had a multiple origin: in the personal grievances of a gifted leader, Ganga Narain; in the feuds and dissensions of petty rajas and zamindars; and in the general discontent of the tribal people under the pressure of alien social and political systems. The tribal discontent was two-fold: with the administrative system and its alien officials imposed upon them by the East India Company, and with the hinduization of their chiefs, which had set disruptive forces at work at the very heart of their society. All these pressures and reactions were simultaneous and interacting, but in trying to understand the origins of the disturbances of 1832 and 1833 they will be considered separately.

But before considering these in detail attention should perhaps be drawn to the extraordinary ignorance of the British officials, and the indifference of some of the local rajas to the various causes of discontent. Even after violent unrest had flared up in Chota-Nagpur and Palamau and had spread in the early days of 1832, into Patkum, no special vigilance was exercised, no enquiry made, no re-disposition of troops ordered in the Jungle Mahals. When Madhava Singh was murdered, the incident was regarded as no more than a



local affray, a private feud quite unexpected by Russell at Bankura but certainly not seen, in the first place, as the signal for a widespread expression of anger and distress by the Bhumijs as a whole. The utter lack of contact between the tribal people and the district authorities was certainly one reason why the unrest so soon got out of hand.

That lack of contact was due in part to the over-burdening of the handful of British officials in the districts. To the collector of Midnapur, of Burdwan or Birbhum, almost single-handed settling the large, populous and revenue - productive plains areas of their charges, the remote, difficult and unrewarding Jungle Mahals were a nuisance, to be pushed on one side whenever possible. Even after the creation of a separate district called the Jungle Mahals, by Regulation XVIII of 1805, Dhalbhum and, except for a few years, Dampara were still included in Midnapur, and for some years longer the Birbhum authorities continued to exercise control over the new district. Even when, after 1823, the collectorship of the Jungle Mahals was made a distinct office,<sup>1</sup> the magistrate-collector had his court and headquarters at Bankura, on the edge of the plains. Neither he nor the Midnapur magistrate could keep an effective control over Barabhum or Dhalbhum from their distant bases, and neither showed much inclination to tour such difficult and unhealthy parganas.

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1. Beng. Rev. Cons. 24 of 17 July 1823 (59/45)

Moreover few of the officials thought it was worth while to attempt inspection and control, for they had a fixed idea that the inhabitants of the hills were irredeemable criminals, turbulent chuars or freebooters. Since they never made any close acquaintance of the Bhumijes they never found it necessary to revise such views. Other than Blunt, Magistrate of the Jungle Mahals from 1806 to 1810, no official seems to have had either sympathy for or understanding of the tribal people. Hamilton's account of the inhabitants of the Bogree pargana, written in 1816, ran, "the leaders of the choars continued to act as if they had been independent of any government, and endeavoured to maintain their independence by the most atrocious acts, and frequently by the murder of individuals in revenge for evidence given against them. Besides thus perpetrating rapine and murder in the prosecution of their ordinary vocation, these miscreants were generally ready to become the instruments of private malice among the inhabitants when the malignity of their hatred stimulated them to assassination, which they were too cowardly to perform with their own hands."<sup>1</sup> He summed up the people as "shy, sullen, inhospitable and uncivilized" and their chiefs as "grossly stupid, debauched, tyrannical, and slaves to the most grovelling superstition."<sup>2</sup>

No less typical of the official attitude was the account of the tribal people, particularly of Dhalbhum, given

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1. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, 2nd Ed., I, 154-155.

2. Ibid. 346.

in 1817 by the Midnapur collector: "The seclusion in which the jungle population live, tends to separate them, both in fact and in idea from the inhabitants of the open country and from their attachment to long prescribed custom and local usages; innovation or anything bearing that appearance in [is] particularly hateful to them, the ferocious nature they display when under the influence of passion dictates the expediency of avoiding any occasion to excite the irritation of a class of men easily thrown into outrage and disorder and very difficult when once aroused by wrongs either real or imaginary to be quieted. The nature of the country opposes [poses] obstacles to the efficiency of the authorities constituted to maintain public order..."<sup>1</sup>

Russell, in charge of the Jungle Mahals from 1828 to 1833, showed no greater sympathy or understanding. When the Bhunijes took to violence he attributed it to their criminal habits. In August 1833, he accordingly wrote to Dent, "whenever any disturbances have occurred in this district, they have always originated either with the jageerdars of Coleapal [Koilapal] or in the Pergunnahs of Patcoom and Burabhoom. Their inhabitants are chiefly of the Bhoomeez class, notorious in former years for plunder and rapine, and late events have shewn how prone they still are

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1. Beng. Rev. Cons. 70 of 16 Jan. 1818 (57/28) : The collector was opposing the introduction of ganungoes in these jungle estates.

to join in any predatory expedition."<sup>1</sup> Dent's long report as Joint Commissioner, presented only a month later, showed how superficial Russell's view was by revealing the genuine grievances which at long last had driven the tribal folk to revolt.

While the tribute or quit-rent was regularly received from the zamindars and there were no major outbreaks of violence or crime, the British officials were content to leave the inhabitants of the Jungle Mahals to their own devices. They did not tour the district, they accepted the reports of their subordinate officials, they noted that in the thirty-three years after 1800 the Dhalbhum zamindar who was in charge of the police, had sent up only two or three cases a year to Midnapur - "and the enquiries into those are conducted with so little discretion and prepared in so slovenly a manner, as rather to defeat than answer the ends of justice"<sup>2</sup> - but did not actively wonder whether justice was being ensured in the Mahals. It was only after the outbreak in 1832 that it was recognized that the tribal people, in face of oppression "would rather submit than prefer complaints in consequence of a repugnance to quit their jungles and visit the haunts of civilized man."<sup>3</sup> <sup>Professor</sup> Haimendorf,

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1. Russell to Dent, 10 Aug. 1833, Para.2, B.C. 1502/58891. In another letter of 13 April 1833 to Braddon (Beng. Cr. Judl Cons. 29 of 3 June 1833, 140) he stated that 'the lower classes' of his district were very 'prone' "to join any system of plunder."
  2. W.S. Alexander to Hunter. 28 Feb. 1833, Para.3, B.C. 1502/58890.
  3. Ibid.

writing about aboriginal rebellions in the Deccan, argues that "the responsibility of the administration lies in countenancing a state of affairs in which unscrupulous newcomers can grow fat at the expense of the aboriginals"<sup>1</sup>. That responsibility could certainly be laid at the door of the Company officials in charge of the Jungle Mahals.

Where the British official was ignorant of the oppression which lay behind the 1832 outbreak, the rajas and zamindars who would have been a defence to their people failed them through indifference or incapacity. In the eighteenth century some of the rajas had led their fellow tribesmen in a brave resistance to the Company. In the 1820's and 1830's they no longer led them against the outsiders, but with their new claims to be Rajputs and good Hindus often even sided with the alien intruders. Unlike the Chota-Nagpur raja, who had made extensive grants of villages to Brahmans and pandas (priests in holy places), we have no evidence of these Jungle chiefs making such grants. Nevertheless the Brahman priests had begun to dominate the social life in several estates, and the pahans, nayas and other tribal religious heads lost their importance. In the northern parts of the Jungle Mahals, the Brahman immigrants generally came from the eastern districts, though in the beginning of the

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1. 'The Aboriginal Rebellions of the Deccan,' Man in India, Rebellion Number, XXV, No.4, Dec. 1945.



19th century some Brahmans also came from Tirhut (Mithila) in north Bihar. On the other hand, in the southern parts and in Dhalbhum,<sup>1</sup> they generally came from Orissa. Once they came, they established themselves as tenure-holders, tenants, money-lenders and even as diwans. The tribal sardars and the general masses felt this encroachment on their age-old rights and liberties as galling.<sup>2</sup> The diwan in Pachet was a Brahman, in Barabhum a Bengali Hindu both before and after Madhava Singh's tenure of office, and in Dhalbhum Madhu Thakur was a Brahman. Moreover all the creatures of these diwans were either Hindu or Muslim, and were out to amass fortunes at the cost of the tribal interests. As an extreme example may be quoted the history of Dhalbhum. With the hinduization of the zamindar's family many adventurers had come into the pargana from outside, had got a foothold, and had then proceeded to make fortunes at the cost of the tribal peasants. From 1825, when a minor succeeded, the process was accelerated by the manager of the estate Thakur Jugal Kishore, who used outsiders to help him in exploiting his position of trust.

One such adventurer was Shamshir Khan, who had come to Narsing-garh as a merchant in the time of Baikunth Dhal, the predecessor and brother of the minor Raja Chitreswar.<sup>3</sup> He was so cunning that he made both Baikunth and Chitreswar

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1. D.G.Manbhum, 80.

2. Dalton, Ethnology, 168.

3. Petition, Raja Chitreswar, Appendix 6, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

his friends, exchanging turbans with them. Later Shamshir also became intimate with the Bara Thakur Jugal Kishore and secured the post of diwan in the place of Gadadhar Panigrahi. But the Khan soon became unpopular because of his oppressive steps against the ryots. At this time another adventurer, a fakir named Maqbul Ali Shah, arrived at Narsing-garh. The Bara Thakur was so impressed by him that he "attended him twice a day and looked up to him as a peer," and the two "occasionally retired together into the jungles to consult."<sup>1</sup> It was under the influence of the fakir that the Bara Thakur totally neglected the affairs of the estate and remained busy with puja (worship).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, at his advice, he exploited the unpopularity of Shamshir Khan, by taking money from the ryots as a fee for replacing the Khan by Banmali. But when only half of the promised amount (₹40,000) had been paid by the ryots, the Bara Thakur, on the advice of Maqbul Ali, turned out Banmali and his sheristadar and appointed Kalu Mian and Madhu Thakur as diwan and the naib diwan respectively. The raja later made Madhu Thakur the diwan.<sup>3</sup>

Again, it so happened that at the time of the unrest, and in the years immediately preceding the outbreak, a number of the Jungle Mahals chiefs were in one way or another incapacitated as rulers. In Dhalbhum Chitreswar Dhal until

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., It was at this very time that the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur was spending most of his time in worship, and had given a foothold to the priests, traders and others.

3. Ibid. Also see Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.46, B.C.1501/58886.

1829 was a minor and in 1833 Dent was to write of "the weakness of the young Raja's intellect and his utter unfitness for all business."<sup>1</sup> In Barabhum Raja Ganga Govind Singh had resigned all the affairs of his estate into the hands of his stepbrother, who became diwan with the express purpose of amassing wealth. In Pachet the raja had similarly handed over all responsibility to his wife and his diwan, having, as Braddon reported, "reduced himself from excessive indulgence in the use of intoxicating and stupefying drugs, to a state of infirmity of mind which would almost warrant his estate being placed under the management of the Court of Wards."<sup>2</sup>

In such circumstances the rajas were incapable of defending the interests of their tribal tenants - and the latter no longer felt it possible to secure redress from their chiefs. The tribesmen's only remedy seemed to be in violence, and when all else failed that remedy they not surprisingly chose in 1832. <sup>P. Jensen</sup> Haimendorf's remarks, made in another context, might very aptly be applied to the Jungle Mahals: "...Any one with first hand experience of conditions in the backward areas and the appalling oppression and exploitation to which many aboriginals are subjected at the hands of more advanced populations must be surprised, not by the occurrence of risings, but by the infrequency of violent

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1. Ibid.

2. Braddon to Govt., 24 Aug. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

reaction on the part of the aboriginals to the loss of their ancestral lands and to their economic enslavement."<sup>1</sup>

That enslavement had followed almost automatically from the action of the Bengal Government in extending the Permanent Settlement and the Cornwallis code to these undeveloped areas, without taking any note of tribal interests, needs and customs. As Hutton says, the early British administration "did very great detriment to the economic position of the tribes through ignorance and neglect of their rights and customs."<sup>2</sup> Though it was the Indian subordinate officials, the amlas of the courts, thanas, and excise and revenue services who actually harassed and exploited with the new and complex regulations, and though in tribal eyes they were the chief villains of the piece, it was the British administration which, as O'Malley says, "was ultimately responsible as it facilitated contacts with tribes which had hitherto been unaffected or only slightly affected by them."<sup>3</sup> It was only the presence of the British power which permitted 'the administrative frontier', 'the traders' frontier' and 'the settlers' frontier',<sup>4</sup> to encroach upon the tribal territory. Cornwallis placed the greatest stress upon the importance of

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1. 'The Aboriginal Rebellions of the Deccan', Man in India, Rebellion Number, XXV, Dec. 1945, No.4.

2. O'Malley (Ed.) Modern India and the West, 438.

3. Ibid. 737.

4. These expressions are from F.G.Bailey, Caste and the Economic Frontier, 230-235.

the judicial side of the administration and the setting up of courts of law free from the play of personality and of uncertainty in the law itself. Yet it is clear that in the Jungle Mahals the introduction of British Courts - and of shrewd darogas and munsifs - was by no means a blessing. With the opening up of tribal territory moneylenders and traders appeared. By 1828 Hamilton was already commenting upon the oppression of the tribal people of the area by immigrant moneylenders: "... all that their vigilance can preserve from the ravages of wild beasts, is extorted from them by the rapacity of the moneylenders."<sup>1</sup> They were charged 100 p.c. interest for their food and nearly 150 p.c. for their seed, with the result that when their crops were ready little or nothing remained beyond the bare means of subsistence.<sup>2</sup> But neither the Government nor the local authorities did anything to check the rapacious spirit of the moneylenders, rather their courts and laws facilitated the collection of debts or the compulsory sale of lands on payment of the usurious claims of the moneymenders.

Moreover, the chiefs and rajas of the Jungle Mahals, who had played a part in introducing outsiders into their estates, often themselves suffered at the hands of moneylenders or of their stewards and agents. Exposed to the action of the sale laws for non payment of revenue to the British authorities, they often lost their lands to scheming

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1. Hamilton, East India Gazetteer, II, 229.

2. Ibid.



estate officials, or, having recourse to the moneylenders, became hopelessly involved in debts. If some of the chiefs did very little to prevent the attacks of the chuars upon the moneylending class it was perhaps not so much from powerlessness, as from a lack of will to act on behalf of a class which had them too in its clutches.

The rise of the Brahmans, or of Muslim merchants to positions of authority in the feudal estates of the Jungle Mahals, and the oppressive activities of the moneylenders were much resented by the Bhumijes. But to them the most obnoxious class of non-tribal people was that of the amlas or petty officials in the service of the East India Company. From their positions of petty authority in courts, police thanas and excise establishments, <sup>they</sup> harassed the people in a multitude of ways. A correspondent of the India Gazette commented upon "the aversion that the natives themselves entertain and perpetually manifest against the administration of justice by their own countrymen [i.e. Bengali or up-country munsifs, darogas and the like]"<sup>1</sup>. Another contemporary argued in similar fashion, "an insurrection in the Jungle Mehaults, as well as in Chotah Nagpore, has been produced through corrupt native influence, there being in truth, in these distant regions, no insaf [justice], no adawlut [court], and no feringhee [English] to speak to."<sup>2</sup> The constant

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1. Report from Camp Dhaka-Kend, 8 June, India Gazette, 14 June 1832.

2. An officer of the 50th N.I., 14 May, India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

attacks upon police thanas and court houses when the rebellion broke out has already been noted.

The menial staff of the munsifs, the peadas, and the Muslim police barkandazes were certainly guilty of acts of oppression when deputed on duty to the villages. These acts might be no more than the forcible provision of fowls or kids for their tables, but might extend to the levying of a regular toll upon all the villages in the district. The police daroga set the example by taking a rupee or so from every village on appointment and much larger sums when he was on the mofussil: His subordinates imitated the daroga and found pretexts for exacting their petty 'fines' from the ghatwals<sup>1</sup> and villages. The police officers might thus collect as much as two or three thousand rupees a year from a pargana.<sup>2</sup>

The salt daroga and his subordinates at the chauki were other officials who abused their powers and suffered in consequence. In Barabhum, for example, the ghatwals accused the daroga of taking ten rupees a year from each person carrying salt for sale. Dent thought their accusation exaggerated, but even he admitted that the salt daroga collected

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1. They would accuse a ghatwal of neglect of his duty of guarding the passes - and then accept hush money.
  2. Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887. Also see Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.23, B.C.1501/58886: "The usual annual payments of two to three rupees from each village according to its size were made to the police at the time of entering the revised lists of Ghatwals and Chokidars collections: in making local investigations, payments to be exempted from proceeding to Bancoorah were here as elsewhere sources of emoluments to the police."

a fee called Minkara of one anna per maund on all salt imported into Barabhum and one rupee annual salami from each person selling salt, besides a douceur paid to the salt chaprasis.<sup>1</sup>

The explosion of 1832-33 may in general terms be attributed to the pressure of outsiders upon tribal life, and the misguided action of the East India Company in subjecting the people to the complex regulations of judicial and revenue systems worked out in other more developed areas. Had the tribal people been left under their chiefs, - the sardar ghatwals, or had British officials maintained a close control of their subordinates, disaster might have been avoided. It must be recognised, however, that in Barabhum in particular special conditions operated to bring dissatisfaction to a head. The early success of the Kols when they rose in revolt in the neighbouring areas of Chota-Nagpur and Palamau, and then in Bamanghati and in unsettled Singhbhum, could not fail to cause a stir in the Jungle Mahals. It is difficult, indeed, to establish any direct connection between the risings of the Dhangar Kols in Chota-Nagpur, and of the Cheros and Kharwars of Palamau with the Bhumij risings. But it seems very likely indeed that the Court of Directors were correct in asserting that "the insurrection in the Jungul Estates doubtless had its origin in the

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.23, B.C.1501/58886.

disturbances which still prevailed in Moherbunge [Mayurbhanj, Bamanghati and Kolhan], and which had been only recently suppressed in Chota-Nagpore".<sup>1</sup> The second phase of the 1832 rising, popularly known as Ganga Narain's Hangama (or turmoil), thus falls into place as a natural continuation of the earlier resistance to the British system.

But the fact that in popular legend it is always linked with the name of Ganga Narain serves as a reminder of the particular part played by the personalities of Ganga Narain and of Madhava Singh. Had there been no pre-existing general discontent among the tribal masses, Ganga Narain could not have obtained such influence.<sup>2</sup> But without a Ganga Narain, equally, the discontent might have continued to simmer without boiling over into violence.

When Russell, the Jungle Mahals magistrate, first gave his views on the causes of the rising, in May 1832, he made four points. "The disturbances appear to have arisen at first," he wrote, "out of malice towards the zemindar's half-brother Madhuba Sing, between whom and Gunga Narain Sing a most deadly hatred has existed for some years past, which has increased of late."<sup>3</sup> He then referred to Madhava Singh's oppressive methods of moneylending<sup>4</sup> which made him

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1. Court of Directors to Bengal Govt., 16 Sept. 1832, Para.8, India and Bengal Despatches, No.6, p.374.

2. An officer of the 50th N.I., India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

3. Russell to Braddon, 11 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

4. Also see Braddon to Govt., 28 May 1832, Para.4 ibid.

obnoxious to the ghatwals and to the general Bhumij masses. Thirdly he referred to a decision of the munsif of Barabazar in favour of Madhava Singh in money suits against the Bhumijes.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, he suggested that the attacks upon the thana and police officials had a double motive: they arose from "the spite towards the police officers from the nature of their calling" and were designed to force them "to leave the pergunnah through fear and to deter them thereby from making any investigation into the disturbances."<sup>2</sup> Each of these four points requires some examination, taking the 'malice' of Ganga Narain first, as the most important.

Martin, the Assistant to the Jungle Mahals magistrate, thought that "the state of the Rajah's family and the conduct of Madhuba Singh" was the cause of unrest.<sup>3</sup> The raja was "deficient in intellect and totally incompetent to manage his own affairs", and his son was "also weak in intellect tho' not in the same degree as his father."<sup>4</sup> Consequently the management of the zamindari had fallen entirely into the hands of Madhava Singh, the raja's step-brother, "a shrewd, cunning and avaricious person, who was besides engaged in trade to a considerable extent."<sup>5</sup> This Madhava had dispossessed Ganga Narain of the lands by custom allotted

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1. According to a correspondent in the 50th N.I., these unjust decisions were a primary cause of the outbreak: India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

2. Ibid.

3. Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para.6, B.C.1505/18887.

4. Ibid.

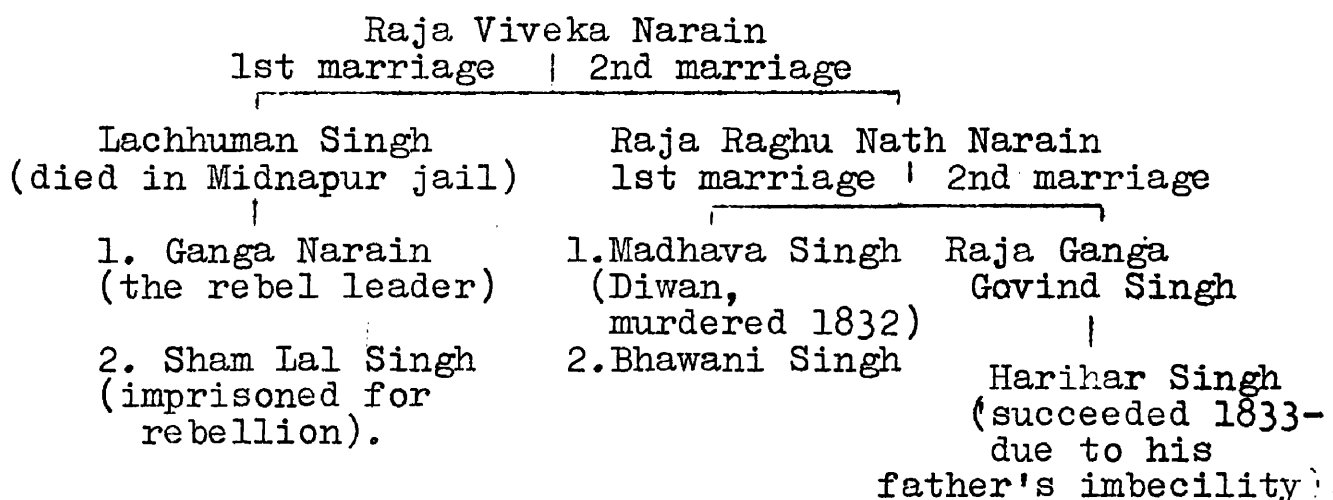
5. Ibid.



to the 'Hakeem'<sup>1</sup> which Ganga Narain had inherited from his father Lachhuman Singh. Then Madhava had persuaded the raja not to provide Ganga Narain even with the means of daily subsistence. Consequently the latter had been reduced to such distress that he had embraced orthodoxy and become a Vaishnava (a follower of God Vishnu) and had gone on a pilgrimage as an ascetic.<sup>2</sup> On his return he took to smuggling salt from Orissa<sup>3</sup> to gain his subsistence. According to his own statement, he had once been accused by the mukhtar (agent) of the Raja of Barabhum of introducing illicit salt, for which he had been apprehended by the British troops though he had later been acquitted.<sup>4</sup>

A brief résumé of the genealogy of the Barabhum rajas will show the relationship between the three main characters, Ganga Narain, Madhava Singh and Raja Ganga Govind Singh.<sup>5</sup> The common ancestor of the three was Raja Viveka

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1. The younger brother of the raja in Barabhum and Dhalbhum was called the 'Hakeem'.
  2. Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para. 7, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. 'A Subscriber', 20 June 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 29 June 1832.
  4. Petition, Pubeen Singh and others, Enclosure, Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  5. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.8, B.C.1501/58886



Narain, Ganga being his grandson by his chief queen or pat-rani, Raja Ganga Govind and Madhava his grandsons by a second marriage. In the 1770's Raja Viveka Narain was forced by the British to quit his gaddi in favour of Raghu Nath Narain,<sup>1</sup> his eldest son, though born of his second wife. According to the local custom, Lachhuman Singh, the son of the patrani, had the better claim to the gaddi. In 1832 Ganga Narain, therefore, asserted that "his father ought to have been succeeded to the zemandaree," but that Raja Viveka Narain "at the instigation of bad advisers," had put forward as his successor Raghu Nath Narain the son of his younger wife and that "in ignorance of the usage of the family the Gentleman [the English officer] took an engagement from Rughoonath Narain to pay 829 Rupees revenue to Government" and so recognised his succession."<sup>2</sup>

Lachhuman Singh, thus dispossessed, for some time received an allowance from his half-brother, the new Raja Raghu Nath. But, "designing people" later caused a misunderstanding between the half-brothers <sup>3</sup> and when Lachhuman came of age, he challenged the decision of the British in 1794 and with the help of his tribal supporters he remained in

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1. Midnapur collector to Board, 10 Apl. 1800, Para.6, Beng. Rev. Cons. 4 of 22 May 1800 (54).  
Lachhuman Singh was II.  
11 years old at that time.
  2. Petition, Pubeen Singh & others, Appendix 3, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886. Vivek Narain later tried to rectify his mistake, but in vain. However he built a house for Lachhuman at Paharpur, and himself lived at Radhanagar where he died.
  3. Ibid.

arms for some time.<sup>1</sup> At last his stockaded fort at Band-dihi was stormed.<sup>2</sup> After some fruitless attempts at further resistance, he was apprehended and he later died in the Midnapur jail.<sup>3</sup> Bharat Singh, his brother, however, continued the struggle for some time longer, being assisted by all the major sardars of Barabhum.<sup>4</sup> The Midnapur magistrate found the troops and the police helpless in the face of such a combined opposition. "Until the five sirdars [taraf sardars of Barabhum] ... with Gomaun Gunjun the head of the chuars at Daudka [Dhadka], Barsing at Simlapaul and Tirbobhum Sing [Tribhuvan Singh] at Katajaur are apprehended," he wrote, "the Jungle Mahals in this District will be always liable to the depredations of these chuars as also the contiguous districts of Burdwan and Pachete."<sup>5</sup> Even when a battalion of troops was stationed at Barabazar the rebels could not be

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1. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 16 of 17 Oct. 1794 ( $\frac{128}{15}$ )

2. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 2 of 1 Aug. 1794 ( $\frac{128}{13}$ )

3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 9, B.C. 1501/58886.

4. Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 26 of 11 March 1796 ( $\frac{128}{27}$ )

Referring to the strength of these sardars, the Magistrate of Midnapur wrote that "these five sirdars used to pay the zemindar the sum of 250 Rupees annually and had villages given up to them in the jungles by the zemindar under the term of 'Sookneendy' [Sukh-Nindi, i.e. ~~f~~ree for peaceful sleep], which implies a promise on their part not to plunder the inhabitants of the pergunna." Ibid.

5. Ibid.

overawed,<sup>1</sup> for Bharat Singh's stronghold in the Dalma Hills could only be approached from the south by a path "ascended by the help of roots of trees," while through the western hills there was "no road though the chuars can climb ~~it~~ singly."<sup>2</sup> Later a jamadar's party stationed in Barabhum was reinforced by Sebundry corps of two jamadars, 3 havildars, 3 Naiks and 75 sepoy to restore order.<sup>3</sup>

In 1798 Raja Raghu Nath Narain died and again the succession was disputed. A struggle began between Ganga Govind Singh, the elder son (16 years old in 1800) but born of the younger wife, and Madhava Singh (15 years old), the younger son by the elder wife. The tribal sardars again supported the son of the patrani.<sup>4</sup> But the Bengali diwan and the ill-advisers of these minors fanned the flame of conflict. The British authorities, whose primary interest was revenue, played a game of expediency. In April 1800 the Midnapur magistrate wrote, "There have always been the greatest disorders in the zemindary owing to the number of powerful

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1. Beng. Rev. Cons. 12 of 13 May 1796 ( $\frac{53}{44}$ ) ; Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 15 July 1796 ( $\frac{128}{28}$ ): The diwan of Barabhum, Bansi Maiti, a Bengali Hindu, was a special target of attack.
  2. J. Fendell, Midnapur Magistrate, to officer commanding at Midnapur, 8 June 1796, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 3 of 15 July 1796 ( $\frac{128}{28}$ )
  3. Fendell to Govt., 14 Nov. 1796, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 22 of 2 Dec. 1796 ( $\frac{128}{30}$ )
  4. I. Imhoff, collector, to Board of Revenue, 16 Apl. 1799, Beng. Rev. Cons. 20 of 3 May 1799 ( $\frac{54}{3}$ )  
Lal Singh, sardar ghatwal of Sauri, and Goman Gunjan of Dhadka were the main supporters.

Surdars who live in different parts of it, and are constantly committing depredations upon each other, and to the disputes, which have always existed between different members of the zemindar's family, and frequently occasioned a great deal of fighting and bloodshed. In this state of things it is obviously desirable that there should be a zemindar in the pergunnah whose superior power and influence may control and keep in awe so many turbulent surdars."<sup>1</sup> Even when the Midnapur collector found that "the zemindars of Manbhum, Shoe-pore [Supur], Gutsillah [Ghatshila or Dhalbhum] and most of those lying in the same direction said that their estates and Burraboom had always devolved to sons by the first wives in preference to older sons by younger wives"<sup>2</sup>, he dismissed this evidence. This, despite the fact that the only known precedent in favour of the law of primogeniture was the succession of Raja Raghu Nath Narain, a succession which he admitted had been forced upon Raja Viveka Narain by the Company.

Regulation X of 1800 forbidding the partition of these jungle estates among brothers did nothing to solve the problem of succession - and indeed complicated the problem by preventing any compromise. The case was then taken to the civil court by Madhava, and the District Court decided in

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1. T.H.Ernst, collector, to Board of Revenue, 10 Apl. 1800, Para. 3, Beng. Rev. Cons. 4 of 22 May 1800 (54)  
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2. Ibid. Para.6.



his favour as the son of the patrani.<sup>1</sup> But the sadr Diwani Adalat decided otherwise: "the estate was the right of the eldest sonborn in wedlock, no matter whether his mother was first or second wife."<sup>2</sup> Ganga Govind Singh was then installed as the raja with the help of a military force, and one Krishna Das was appointed the manager of the estate.<sup>3</sup>

Madhava Singh was offered a maintenance grant, but he refused to submit so tamely.<sup>4</sup> Consequently disturbances continued and most of the tribal sardars and zamindars of the area helped Madhava, whom they thought to be the rightful heir. In April 1805 Raja Ganga Govind Singh wrote, "The chooars have made Madhava Singh their sirdar and all the chooars being in league, plunder the houses of the Ryots in the villages of Burrabhoom. He has also prevented the payment of the revenue of the Punj-Sirdaree and Sutrakhanee and pergunnah Chuleema [Chelyama]".<sup>5</sup> The police daroga of thana Radhanagar also represented to the magistrate that the depredations of the Bhumij sardars were on the increase, and that the ryots were flying in terror.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Petition, Madhava Singh, Recd. 16 June 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June 1805 ( $\frac{129}{14}$ )
  2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.10. B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Hunter, Bengal MS.Records, Nos. 11889 and 11890.
  4. Petition, Raja Ganga Govind Singh, Recd. 16 June 1805, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June 1805 ( $\frac{129}{14}$ )
  5. Petition, Raja Ganga Govind, Recd. 27 Apl. 1805, Beng. Cr.Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June 1805 ( $\frac{129}{14}$ )
  6. Petition, Daroga Janmayjay Ghose, Recd. 17 June 1805, Ibid.

It is from this period that the personal enmity between Madhava Singh and Ganga Narain Singh began. Since the former had become the hero of the tribal sardars, the latter came over to the side of the raja. The tribal chieftains (especially of the Punj-Sardari) had, in fact, no grievance against Ganga Narain, whom they had supported at his fort at Band-dihi after the apprehension of his father.<sup>1</sup> The magistrate reported about this episode, "I do not learn that they had any cause of complaint against Gunga Narrain. It is believed that they determined to provide for Madhava Singh because they considered him as injured by the zemindaree being decreed to his brother. They accordingly disposed [dispossessed?] Gunga Narrain and established Madhava Singh in his place. Gunga Narrain immediately attached himself to the zemindar, and with him procured assistance."<sup>2</sup> (It was in this period that Madhava Singh, as Ganga Narain later alleged, dragged Ganga's wife out of his house and took possession of his hearth and house.<sup>3</sup>

Another cause of the chiefs of Satrakhani and Punj-Sardari supporting Madhava Singh was that their enemy Lal

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1. Another Petition, Daroga Janmayjay Ghose, Ibid.
  2. Midnapur Magistrate to Govt., 3 July 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 2 of 11 July 1805 (129  
14)
  3. Petition, Pubeen Singh and others, Appendix 3, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

Singh Sardar <sup>1</sup> was being supported by Raja Ganga Govind Singh. Thus, Ganga Narain, his relation, the zamindar of Manbhum, and Lal Singh Sardar joined the raja, while Fakir Sardar, the new chief of Satrakhani sardars and the chiefs of Punj-Sardari were supporting Madhava Singh.<sup>2</sup>

This meant many a tribal fracas leading to bloodshed. The police daroga of Barabhum could not suppress the unrest - often he could not even secure any intelligence.<sup>3</sup> Troops could not be stationed in this unhealthy pargana during the rainy season. Appeals to reason could not take the place of the use of force: the magistrate reported, "They are mere savages, and have but a faint idea of obedience being due from them to Government; it is in vain to expect that people of such habits, and inhabiting such a country as they do,

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1. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 2 of 11 July 1805 (129)  
Formerly Lal Singh was their chief. But (14)  
he had been expelled 3 or 4 years before this for  
murdering four of their chiefs. Now he was invited from  
his exile in Singhbhum through the agency of Goman Gunjan  
by Raja Ganga Govind.

In 1832 this Lal Sardar was supported by this raja in a civil suit in which the raja stated that he and his ancestors had granted "the Sookhneendee grant of 100 beegas to Lal Surdar." On the basis of this evidence Lal Sardar won the case: J.W. Ricketts, Principal Sardar Amin, 23 Apl. 1832, No. 2067, original suit, Zila Jungle Mahals India Gazette, 15 Feb. 1833.

2. Midnapur Magistrate to Govt., 3 July 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 2 of 11 July 1805 (129)  
(14)

3. Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June 1805 (129)  
(14)

can be perfectly subjected."<sup>1</sup>

The Government, alarmed, informed the magistrate that if Madhava Singh would not be satisfied with the pecuniary allowance sanctioned by the court's decree, then the zamindar of Barabhum and his supporters should be asked to exert themselves in his apprehension. Similarly, the other zamindars of the area and the daroga of Barabhum were to try for his arrest.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after this Madhava was captured by the supporters of the raja, including Ganga Narain.<sup>3</sup> Now he realized that he could not capture power by force, and so, becoming reconciled to the raja, he secured the post of his diwan. But a decade of struggle left its traces in the life-long enmity between Madhava and Ganga Narain. In 1805 Madhava had complained to the district authorities that the raja had once "sent against me as far as Midnapore with a design to kill me Gungah Narrain Singh of Bandheea [Ganga Narain Singh of Band-dihi], a notorious robber who killed the company's sepoy's ....He has now given Gunga Narrain Singh who is a

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1. Midnapur Magistrate to Govt., 3 July 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 2 of 11 July 1805 ( $\frac{129}{14}$ )
  2. Govt. to Midnapur Magistrate, 11 July 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 3 of 11 July 1805 ( $\frac{129}{14}$ )
  3. Petition, Pubeen Singh & others, Appendix 3, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

notorious chooar a house near his own."<sup>1</sup>

Naturally enough, Madhava Singh made it a point to take revenge upon Ganga Narain. He was already his 'hereditary enemy', now he became his 'personal and private foe'<sup>2</sup>. So the first thing that he did after becoming the diwan was to seize Ganga Narain and to send him to the Jungle Mahals magistrate on various charges.<sup>3</sup> When Ganga Narain was released by the magistrate, he was deprived of the Punj-Sardari, which he "had been permitted to hold after his father's death."<sup>4</sup> According to Dent, "Gunga Narain was not perhaps strictly entitled to it, but as a member of the family he had at least a right to a suitable provision for his maintenance", of which Madhava Singh had deprived him.<sup>5</sup> Madhava Singh vexed Ganga Narain in several other ways, reducing him to beggary. To quote Ganga Narain's own words, "I was destitute of food and if I asked any person in Burrabhoom for anything the Zemeendar and Madhubi Singh fined him 1 Rupee 4 annas, and forbade his giving me anything in future. Madheela Singh Baboo has all along oppressed me, and I

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1. Petition, Madhava Singh, Recd. 16 June 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June 1805 (129)  
He asserted that the tribal <sup>(14)</sup>  
sardars were supporting him because he was the son of the late Raja Raghu Nath Narain by his superior wife, and because the raja had exacted Rs. 1000 from them to compensate himself for his expenses in the late litigation.
  2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 11, B.C. 1501/58886.
  3. Petition, Pubeen Singh and others, Appendix 3, Ibid.
  4. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 11, B.C. 1501/58886.
  5. Ibid.



represented the circumstance to the Zeemindar who said as long as Madhula Singh remains he could do nothing for me."<sup>1</sup> Thus, Madhava Singh secured "to himself the lasting enmity of a bold ... powerful man."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Raja Ganga Govind Singh and his family also could not readily forget the harassment caused them by Madhava Singh for a whole decade. There may not be any truth in the allegation of Ganga Narain that he killed the diwan at the orders of the raja,<sup>3</sup> but the raja may well have heaved a sigh of relief at the exit of his diwan who had usurped all real power and who had made the raja his debtor.<sup>4</sup> According to Dent, the raja could not forget that Madhava had opposed his succession and the wife and son of the raja were "jealous of the uncontrolled influence and sway" of the diwan who "contrived by his oppressive and unfeeling conduct to render himself almost equally obnoxious to every indivi-

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1. Petition No.3, Ganga Narain, Jeth, 1239 Fasli, Enclosure, Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Petition, Nos.2 and 3, Ganga Narain, Enclosures, Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887. In the latter petition he stated that he was even rewarded after this by a pan-patta (grant) of Punj-Sardari from the raja. Later on he told his ghatwal supporters that Shrikant Sharma (a favourite Brahman of the raja who was later rewarded by Dent in 1833), the raja's son and wife had all ordered him to do away with Madhava Singh, for which they restored him to the estate of Punj-Sardari: Petition, Pub-  
een Singh and others, Appendix 3, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  4. Dent thought that "Gunga Narain Sing may have been well satisfied in his own mind that the death of Madhula Sing would be an acceptable occurrence to the zemindar's family from the state of thralldom and dependence in which they were kept by him:" Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para. 24, B.C.1501/58886.

dual throughout Burrabhoom from his brother the Raja and his family to the lowest Bhoomij."<sup>1</sup>

Another effect of the succession struggles was that the tribal chieftains, who were alienated by the Company's overriding of their succession customs, became aware that it was possible to defy the Company with some impunity. This was particularly true of Ganga Narain, who had a double grievance, over his father's death in prison and the harassing of his uncle, and by their rejection of his own claims, despite the presentation of five or six petitions.<sup>2</sup>

Ganga Narain had a grievance against the Raja of Barabhum as well. He still vividly remembered that his father had been seized and ill-treated with the connivance of the father of the raja and that he himself had been ill-treated by the troops several times at the request of the raja or his diwan.<sup>3</sup> No wonder, therefore, that he made several allegations against the raja and his family, and had once even tried to seize the person of the raja's son.<sup>4</sup>

Ganga Narain's long years of destitution made him a man of iron will, and he was always planning his revenge. First he extended his family connections, with the neighbouring rajas: one of his wives came from the Bishnupur raja's

1. Ibid.

2. Petition, No.3, Ganga Narain, Enclosure, Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

3. Pubeen Singh and others, Appendix 3, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

4. See Chapter IV, p.

family and the other from Manbhum. One of his daughters was married to one Kanu Babu<sup>1</sup> of Ambikanagar, the second to Hari Babu of the same pargana, the third to Amru Babu of Manbhum and the fourth (by a concubine) to an illegitimate Babu of the Pachet raja's family.<sup>1</sup> These matrimonial alliances stood him in good stead, and he was "generally countenanced by them" during the unrest.<sup>2</sup> Even during those stormy days he won over the zamindar of Ambikanagar with the offer of marrying his son to the latter's daughter.<sup>3</sup>

Then he developed the closest contact with the tribal sardars and the Bhumij masses. In course of time he came to possess "great influence among the Bhoomjis [sic], and was latterly indebted to their kindness, ..., for almost the necessaries of life."<sup>4</sup> They could not therefore ignore the recall of "their favourite, their abused Gunga," especially when they themselves were very much looking forward to having such an able, cool and stern leader.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, Ganga Narain was popularly held to be "a victim of circumstances" - his "nearest relations dishonoring [sic] and oppressing him - debarred by his rank from seeking employment either in trade or in the profession of the army ..., what course could he adopt?".<sup>6</sup> Through years

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1. Babu was a title of the maintenance grantees, generally relatives of the zamindar.

2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.8, B.C.1501/58886.

3. Ibid.

4. A private letter, Aug., Calcutta Courier, 15 Sept. 1832.

5. A Subaltern, East Indian Journal, V, Part I, 475.

6. Ibid.

of suffering he had become cruel at heart and at the same time cunning, making him peculiarly capable of leading a ferocious band of tribesmen. (According to an eye-witness account of the murder of Madhava Singh, "after striking the first blow he caused each Sirdar present to fire an arrow into the body of Madhub Sing ...."<sup>1</sup>

He was also "of violent temper"<sup>2</sup> and during the unrest he was directly responsible for the murder of several people. His passwords for putting anybody to death, according to an anecdote, was "Ghaut par kur" (show him across the pass). Thus "whenever a prisoner was brought before his tribunal on the Dulma [hill], and when he had heard all he had to say and urge, he either dismissed him with that or some other significant phrase. No man who heard Gunga order him 'to be shewn across the ghaut' ever heard mortal voice an hour afterwards. He was led down the hill and killed at the bottom."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.12, B.C.1501/58886. Madhava was kidnapped at the house of Gopi Naya of Sirka. The plan of murder was arranged at Barida. "Advantage was taken of Madhuba Sing's going into Punj-Surdarree to inspect a large quantity of corn which he had collected from his debtors there, he was seized at the house of the person who was acting as Head Ghatwal from Annund Patur (who had obtained a month's leave of absence) was carried into the Jungle and murdered by the hand of Gunga Narain at a place called Bamnee Damree, a hilly spot in the jungle about  $\frac{1}{2}$  Coss from Bamnee": Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para.7, B.C.1501/58887.
  2. Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para.7, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. A Subaltern, op.cit. 480.

However, had Ganga Narain not possessed several qualities of a leader he could not have led his people successfully against a mighty power for several months. He may not have been 'a patriot'<sup>1</sup>, but he undoubtedly "saw his friends groaning under the oppressions of Mahdula Sing [Madhava Singh] - and perhaps wished to aid them and at the same time revenge himself."<sup>2</sup> He undoubtedly showed 'considerable organising ability ... in his brief career'.<sup>3</sup> He struggled up to his last breath, even though deserted by his friends and relations. According to Thompson, he was long remembered for his exploits: "Good-looking women were sure of his esteem, and when I was in India he was still revered for his gallantry."<sup>4</sup>

It may seem odd that in these exploits Ganga Narain was able to secure the support of the tribal chiefs against Madhava Singh, the man whose cause they had supported from 1798 to 1805. Their revulsion against Madhava is explained, however, by his misuse of power as diwan and by his having taken to the ignoble profession of money-lending. The profession was degrading in their eyes, and where they themselves suffered by being his debtors, was doubly obnoxious. As a military officer put it, "It may seem inconsistent with the respect paid by the Bhoomjis [sic] to the persons of

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Thompson, Life of Metcalfe, 306.

4. Ibid.



their Rajah's family their joining in the murder of Madhuba Sing, but if we recollect that Gunga Narain, who was by many believed to have a better right to the Gudhee [sic] than its present possessor was their leader and that Madhuba Sing, disregarding the prejudices of his family, was a tradesman, and one too far from upright in his dealings, and that he was naturally disliked by the Bhoomjis most of whom owed him money or grain, our wonder will cease ..."<sup>1</sup> It is necessary now to consider this second of the causes of revolt as defined by Russell.

Madhava Singh was undoubtedly "far superior in intellect and energy to the remainder of the family",<sup>2</sup> but he applied his talents almost entirely to the amassing of wealth, and misused his position as a chief and as diwan to those ends. In his "extensive and lucrative trade" his position as diwan "gave him a complete monopoly."<sup>3</sup> It was "the merciless severity with which he enforced" his claims, particularly against the ghatwals that made them his "inveterate foes",<sup>4</sup> for against them he used every advantage which the British legal system afforded to a creditor.

Land is nearly always considered the basis of tribal

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1. A Subaltern, op.cit. 475.
  2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.11, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ibid. Also see Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para.7, B.C.1501/58887: "Both ryots and Ghatwals were his debtors, and as he was rigorous in the execution of his debts the detestation in which he was held by the whole population was extreme."

society, and the original clearers of land have a permanent claim to it. The unfeeling and cruel attachment and sale of a debtor's property in land which he enforced was a rude shock to these "ignorant people, particularly attached to their lands."<sup>1</sup> They were ready to pay according to their means, but "they could not comprehend the justice which turned them out of house and land."<sup>2</sup> "The house and effects of the debtor were attached and advertised for sale on an appointed day, previous to which the claim was generally adjusted by the private transfer of a village or piece of land in satisfaction of the claims, and an urzee <sup>3</sup> was given into the moonsiff (through whom all these processes were executed) begging that the sale might be suspended as the claim had been settled."<sup>4</sup> Such adjustments could not long continue. The debtor reached the point where he had no more land to spare, and where he refused to sell further household property. Then the diwan took to other more degrading methods. Two cases in the family of the minor sardar ghatwal of Satrakhani which occurred just before the unrest showed to Dent how "utterly regardless Madhuk Sing was of their feelings and prejudices."<sup>5</sup> In the first case the household property and the family-mansion at Gulargosi in the heart

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.21, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Ibid.

3. Arzi = petition.

4. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.21, B.C.1501/58886.

5. Ibid.

of Satrakhani was attached and sold in satisfaction of a decree against the minor's father. As little was realized by this, a second attachment in the same account was taken against other properties including the sardar's thakurbari (temple) and an idol of the God, which were all sold. When this case came before Dent as the judge of the Jungle Mahals, he cancelled the sale on the grounds that it would "outrage the feelings of the Ghatwals."<sup>1</sup> But if this extortion was halted there were others which did not come to the notice of the British authorities. Dent admitted in 1833, "Our law of debtor and creditor severe perhaps in itself was rendered doubly so when applied to these rude and ignorant people and Madhuba Sing did not hesitate to avail himself to the utmost of the entire power it gave him over the property of his debtors in compelling payment."<sup>2</sup>

Madhava Singh's lust for wealth was unsatiated. Not satisfied with the huge profits of his lending business, he used his power as diwan to extort further sums from the ghatwals. On the plea that the rents of the four main sardar ghatwals were very light, he doubled them, calling the additional cess 'mamoollee'.<sup>3</sup> This was naturally resisted, and at least in Satrakhani it was never fully enforced.

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.11.

3. Ibid. Rents paid so far for Dhadka were Rs.120, for Satrakhani Rs.240, Punj-Sardari Rs.160, and Tinsaya 160.

In the beginning the local officers assigned the cause of the unrest solely to the mutual enmity between Ganga Narain and Madhava and the latter's unpopularity among the Bhumijes. Martin, in June 1832, thought that the rising against Government was solely the effect of the crime Ganga Narain and his associates had committed and that Ganga Narain, realising that his crime was unpardonable, was trying to engage the people in excesses to shield himself.<sup>1</sup> But the petition of the ghatwals in reply to the magistrate's parwana in the same month showed that their own grievances were many.

This brings us to the third of Russell's points: the hostility of the tribal chiefs and people to the Barabazar munsif and other company officials. The ghatwals charged the Raja of Barabhum, the police officers, the munsif and the salt daroga with various acts of oppression.<sup>2</sup> The zamindar was accused of extorting "in addition to the regular Panchak, a considerable excess, as well as other large sums under the denomination of house tax and other illegal cesses amounting in the aggregate to about 8 or 9000 Rupees a year; in consequence of which oppressive conduct they are, they say,

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1. Martin to Braddon, 5 June 1832, Para. 8, B.C.1501/58887.
  2. Dent thought that the insurgents had a sanguine hope (after their partial success in the beginning and after the hasty withdrawal of the troops early in June 1832) that they could not be apprehended, and that they would eventually make terms with the authorities: Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.18, B.C.1501/58886.
  2. Petition No.5, 11 Jeth 1239 fasli, Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

reduced to the greatest distress."<sup>1</sup> The diwan in some cases had compounded the house-tax (ghar-taki) in many villages.<sup>2</sup> There were several other exactions (abwabs) under the general denomination of mangan or voluntary subsidy, etc; for example rates for the raja's purchase of elephants, and horses.<sup>3</sup> In so far as these were within moderate limits, the tribesmen did not murmur. But these exactions had been taking on the form of permanent taxes.<sup>4</sup> In their catalogue of grievances they included the fact that, besides the above-mentioned horse and elephant taxes, there were a khushi-taki or rejoicing-tax, for instance when the raja was enjoying a tiger or other hunt, etc., a hal-taki or plough-tax, shadi-taki or tax upon marriage and so on.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, the diwan was mainly instrumental in enforcing these demands.

The tribal sardars also accused the subordinate servants of the Government posted in this pargana of oppression and exaction. The munsif of Barabazar was charged with having colluded with Madhava Singh, and "passed decrees in his favor [sic] in the period of three weeks after the institution of the suits and with forcibly enforcing his decisions thrice over, and sharing the amount with Madhava Singh."<sup>6</sup> On an examination of the records of the district

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1. Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, Ibid.

2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.11, B.C.1501/58886.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Letter from Camp Barabazar, 24 May 1832, India Gazette, 30 May 1832.

6. Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.



civil court for the last three years, Dent found that no specific charge of corruption had been preferred against the munsif, but several applications from the tribal defendants in the civil suits were found, asking that their suits should be transferred from the munsif's court to that of one of the sadar amins at Bankura "on the grounds that the munsiff favoured Madhub Sing and from the influence of the latter they could not expect a fair trial."<sup>1</sup> Since the character and power of Madhava Singh were "well known to the European authorities at Bancoorah", these requests were invariably complied with.<sup>2</sup> For that reason only a few cases of Madhava Singh's had been decided of late by the munsif.

But it is strange that the district authorities, who were in the know, did not stop the munsif altogether. Dent noted in 1833, "it is extremely probable that the munsiff favoured Madhub Sing but the general prejudices against him (the Munsiff), I should say, was [sic] occasioned by his being the instrument for the execution of the decrees of the Judges, Registrars and Sudder Ameen's Courts, which in all countries is a disagreeable and unpopular duty."<sup>3</sup> All these factors gave a notion to the simple tribal folk that the munsif was out to ruin them. Even when he was acting under the orders of the superior courts the ignorant tribesmen

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.22, B.C.1501/58886.  
 2. Ibid.  
 3. Ibid.

thought that it was by his own whim that he took action. Naturally enough, in case of repeated attachments and sales of properties in satisfaction of the same decree (the proceeds of the previous sales having been found inadequate to the demands), the Bhumijes thought that he was executing the decrees thrice over, little knowing that he was acting under orders of the superior court.<sup>1</sup> Where such misunderstandings existed it would have been well for the authorities to have made the situation clear.

The Burdwan commissioner thought that the ghatwals should have represented their grievances to the European authorities at Bankura who had never ignored their complaints: "I have no reason to believe that any complaints preferred by the Ghatwals did not receive from the European public functionaries that degree of attention to which they appeared to be entitled."<sup>2</sup> Dent, on the other hand, thought that had not the diwan and the raja been their chief oppressors, several minor abuses would have been kept within bounds.<sup>3</sup> But no one blamed the European authorities for leaving the pargana at the mercy of the non-tribal subordinate officers, tax-farmers and others. In fact, the encroachment by the administrative frontier in the form of regulations and taxes had jeopardized the very existence of the tribal society.

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1. Ibid.

2. Braddon to Govt., 12 June 1832, Para.15, B.C.1501/58887.

3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.23, B.C.1501/58886.

Naturally enough, the reaction of the tribal peoples was violent.

In 1833 Dent admitted that the mode of levying the abkari tax was 'far from satisfactory', and that the then farmer (a Muslim named Shaikh Khitab) used 'considerable oppression and extortion in realizing the amount from the villages and Soondees.'" <sup>1</sup> In fact, the non-tribal abkari farmer here, as in Chota-Nagpur, made it a point to derive the maximum profits possible at whatever cost to tribal interests.

Russell's final point, about the reasons for the attacks upon the police has already been made earlier. The police in Barabhum were not strong enough to impose order, when that was necessary, but were strong enough to harass the people with their petty abuses and exactions. The attacks upon them made in 1833 were natural, perhaps even merited.

The problems of Barabhum were made particularly intractable by the personal failings of the leading figures in that district, and it was inevitably in Barabhum that disorders first broke out. But there were similar occasions for unrest in a number of the other parganas of the Jungle Mahals, and to these some attention must more briefly be paid, remembering always that certain grievances were common to most of the area. As Braddon reported in July 1833, "Many of the zemindars of the Jungle Estates are deeply involved

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1. Dent to Govt., 9 Apl. 1833, Para.5, B.C.1502/58890.

in debt, most of their creditors are the principal Mahajuns in their respective estates and in consequence their houses are generally marked out for plunder."<sup>1</sup>

Patkum, on the borders of the Jungle Mahals and Ramgarh districts, was disturbed during both the phases of the unrest, for its people were akin both to the Mundas of Chota-Nagpur and Tamar and to the Bhumijes of Barabhum. The specific grievance in Patkum was, however, found in the actions of the non-tribal sazawal appointed by the Court of Wards during the long minority of the raja. The "general enhancement of the rents of all inferior holders without regard to the rights of the parties or the usage of the country by the surzawal "was particularly felt."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the villages held for their support by the different members of the raja's family were resumed and brought on the rent-roll of the estate.<sup>3</sup>

A second cause of unrest was the chief's indebtedness to the mahajans, brought in by, or at least protected in their exactions by, the sazawal. No notice was taken of their penetration of the tribal economy until the disturbances began. When notice was taken it was in a way scarcely sympathetic to the tribal people: Russell spoke of the early unrest having "originated in ill-will and out of private

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1. Braddon to Govt., 28 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.27, B.C.1501/58886.

pique towards the native Mahajuns and other respectable and wealthy inhabitants who have settled there."<sup>1</sup> (One may note the frequent appearance in official reports of the words 'respectable inhabitants - meaning non-tribal traders and usurers.)

Some of the leaders of this unrest were the sons and descendants of the former holders of villages (the muras or mundas and mankis) who had been ousted from their possessions by the non-tribal settlers. Once these outsiders had settled in these villages, they took to money-lending and the tribal people soon became heavily indebted to them. In the words of Russell, "It is well known that the Ryotts are all at the mercy of their Mahajuns, from whom they are under the necessity of borrowing money for carrying on their agricultural pursuits, and that the latter demand an exorbitant rate of interest, and generally are at the harvest season paid in kind, taking one half, if not more of each Ryott's produce, who is again compelled to borrow, and thus remains involved without any hope of extricating himself from his difficulties."<sup>2</sup> Before the coming of these outsiders, the Bhumijes had carried out their shifting cultivation with the customary assistance of their village and circle headmen - eking out a bad season by a little cattle-lifting. Now they declared they would not permit any of the outsiders, the

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1. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.28, B.C.1363/54226.

2. Ibid.



thikadars, to stay: "They have possessed the landed property of the Moorahs, Mankees. So drive them from hence."<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the first outbreak the zamindar of Patkum was at Bankura to discuss matters connected with his taking over charge of the estate from the Court of Wards. The diwan was also out of the pargana. The police mohurir, finding all the ghatwals joining the revolt, fled for his life. Thus there was nobody with authority to arrest the wave of hatred which swept over Patkum.

Some of the zamindars of the neighbouring estates were also in league with the insurgents. Many had a family tradition of hostility to the British authorities, but their main motive was to get rid of the heavy burden of debt. Thus, in pargana Bagmundi "the brother of the late zemindar with the Moorah and 3 or 4 leading men of the village caused an arrow to be brought to the neighbourhood, which was represented to have been sent by the Coles who were said to be immediately at hand, and would murder the Mahajans ..."<sup>2</sup> The sole object of this was "to cause them to leave their habitations, which were consequently plundered during their absence, and [some] of them burnt down by the people of the village as a cloak to their own actions.".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Statement, Singrai, Enclosure, Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54226.
  2. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.9, Ibid.
  3. Ibid.

The zamindars of Torang and Jhalda also established contact with the insurgents of Silli (a dependency of Chota-Nagpur) through some of their servants, causing the spread of the unrest to their estates. The reason for this connivance was that they were indebted to the mahajans at Elu.<sup>1</sup> Thus Korung Mura,<sup>2</sup> an agent of the Jhalda zamindar, and an active leader in Silli, brought a party of about 100 Kol insurgents to his village in Jhalda, created a large tribal army there, and with it attacked and burnt the houses of 40 non-tribal money-lenders at Elu.<sup>3</sup>

Russell also got evidence that the zamindar of Jhalda had personally gone to talk to his agent about the plans for the outrage. "The evidence against him [the Jhalda zamindar]", wrote Russell, "showing his participation in the outrages that have taken place at 'Eloo' is of such a nature that I have deemed it an indispensable part of my duty to bring him into Bancoorah a prisoner."<sup>4</sup> Not only was his complicity later conclusively proved, but he was also found to have caused the plunder of refugees from Chota-Nagpur who had entered Jhalda with such of their possessions as they could carry.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. Gokul Mura in statement, Singrai, Enclosure, Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54226.

3. Russell to Govt., 29 Jan. 1832, Ibid.

4. Russell to Govt., 22 March 1832, Para.3 Ibid.

5. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Paras. 12-14, B.C.1363/54226.

In Patkum proper, the mother of the minor zamindar and his diwan were found to have been directly responsible for the outbreak. The latter had caused several cartloads of plundered property, about 1000 head of cattle and two or three thousand rupees in cash to be brought to the zamindar's house at Ichagarh, and had personally encouraged and supervised several outrages.<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of this evidence Russell came to the rather hasty conclusion that all "the disturbances in Patcoom have been caused by the principal officer [the diwan and late guardian, Subur Singh] of the zemindar and dependent petty zemindars or Ghatwals, those in the Pergh. [pargana] of Bagmoondie by the brother of the late zemindar, and those at Eloo by the zemindar of Jhulda and other individuals."<sup>2</sup> He should surely have mentioned the blunders committed by the sazawal, the inefficiency of the police, and the popular irritation with the law's complexities and the use made of them by outsiders.

Moreover, not only had the example of apparently successful risings, revenge and plunder been set by the Larka Kols of Singhbhum and the Dhangar Kols of Chota-Nagpur, but individual rebels from those areas, especially from Tamar, had come to Patkum to incite and support the outbreak. The

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1. Ibid. Para. 5. In 1807-8 also this diwan had helped the rebel chief Mukunditya.

2. Russell to Govt., 22 March 1832, Para. 3, B.C.1363/54226.

presence of an insurgent force at Palbagan in Tamar, only <sup>four</sup> ~~seven~~ miles distant from the boundary of Patkum gave the disgruntled tribal sardars of Patkum an opportunity to seek their help in plundering and taking vengeance on their enemies and yet to attribute all such actions to the insurgents from outside.<sup>1</sup>

The second phase of unrest in Patkum was only a continuation of the first, though the wind this time blew from Barabhum and not from Tamar. Not only were the zamindar, his mother and his diwan again suspected of complicity,<sup>2</sup> but two of the ringleaders, Tulsī Digwar and Berah Singh, had also been the leaders of the earlier unrest. They had remained at large, even though Russell had offered a reward for their apprehension.<sup>3</sup>

There were also several incidents of the second phase connected with those of the first. For example, Ganga Narain claimed that he wanted to take revenge for the insult done to the Patkum zamindar, whose private apartments were searched by Russell after the first phase of unrest.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the ghatwals of Barabhum did not trust the words of

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1. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.1, Ibid. The house of all non-tribal people, Bengalis and upcountry mahajans, were plundered: Ibid., Paras. 1-3.
  2. Ibid. Paras 6 and 10. Also see Russell to Braddon, 10 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.19, B.C.1363/54226.
  4. Braddon to Govt., 11 June 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

Russell in May 1832, when he offered pardon, because hundreds of their brethren in Patkum had been arrested by him.<sup>1</sup> Not only that, the tribal rebels of the second phase tried to prevent the court's obtaining witnesses for the trial of prisoners concerned in the earlier unrest.<sup>2</sup>

There was also a continuity in the basic causes of the unrest. The ghatwals and tenure holders who had risen against the sazawal's oppression in the early months of 1832, rose again in the second phase, this time against their raja. He had meanwhile attained his majority and had been placed in possession of his estate, but once in power he refused to undo the wrongs inflicted by the sazawal by restoring the khorphosh villages to his relations and reducing the enhanced revenue demand upon the lesser chiefs.<sup>3</sup> This led the disgruntled elements to call in the Barabhum insurgents.

Another major cause of trouble was Russell's establishment of a police thana with upcountry barkandazes in Patkum, in February 1832. It was designed "to strengthen the police"<sup>4</sup> but in fact alienated both ghatwals and people, the more so as the Muslim daroga was a "strong man". The Burdwan commissioner recognised the error when he reported in July

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1. "The Ghautwars of Patcomb plundered grain and committed other excesses and atrocities, of which they accused the Coles; but, these having been clearly traced to themselves, they were apprehended, and are at present in confinement in the Bancoorah jail." Calcutta Courier, 6 June 1832, Footnote.
  2. Braddon to Govt., 10 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.
  3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.27, B.C.1501/58886.
  4. Russell to Braddon, 6 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.



1832 that the whole turmoil in this pargana was caused by "the relations and dependents of the zemeendar, chiefly with a view of causing the removal of the Patcoom Thanah."<sup>1</sup>

However, once concessions had been made to the grantees by the raja, and once the thana had been withdrawn by the authorities, the pargana was soon pacified.

The zamindars of Bagmundi, Kasipur, Pachet, Manbhum, Shamsundarpur and Phulkusmā, who had inherited a tradition of resistance to the British,<sup>2</sup> and who were often related to the Barabhum insurgents, were nearly all encumbered with debt.

Dent in 1833 found both the mankis and the Raja of Bagmundi much involved and their lands extensively mortgaged, and he saw "little hopes (under the existing system) of sales for the discharge of these debts being avoided."<sup>3</sup> To

1. Braddon to Govt., 10 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887. The daroga had to flee to Singhbhum in fear of his life, while the ghatwals joined the insurgents.
2. In fact, all the leading figures of this unrest were closely related with the leaders of the earlier disturbances: Ganga Narain's father and uncle had fought the British for a long time; Raghu Nath Singh of Dampara was the nephew and heir of Baijnath who defied the British authorities for more than a decade; the father of Pratap Singh of Raipur, Brindavan Digwar of Kursul, had also fought against the authorities for long; BirSingh, the father of Bahadur Singh of Koilapal was a noted rebel; the forefathers of the zamindars of Barabhum, Dhalbhum, Manbhum, Pachet, Shamsundarpur and Phulkusmā had invariably resisted the British penetration at one stage or the other. Thus, there was a family tradition of resistance against the constituted authority which encroached upon their age old freedom. See Chapter I. Also see Russell to Dent, 10 Aug. 1833, Paras. 5 and 6, B.C.1502/58891.
3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.28, B.C.1501/58886.

make matters worse, the resources of the estate were "greatly absolved<sup>1</sup> in providing for the younger branches of the family."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in Kasipur the expenses of a protracted civil suit pending before the Sadr Diwani Adalat, and the improvidence and extravagance of the raja had "inextricably involved him in pecuniary difficulties."<sup>2</sup> Many of his finest villages had been mortgaged. Naturally, he, in conjunction with his relations in Pachet, had invited Ganga Narain to this area.

Shamsundarpur and Phulkusmā were also disturbed because the zamindars were much embarrassed by their debts to their mahajans and they wanted to get rid of the importunities of their creditors.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in Jhalda and Chhatna the sale and attachment of property in respect of usurious loans were the causes of irritation.<sup>4</sup> The sale of these two estates had been averted only by private transfers and mortgages, but by 1832 they were hastening towards the brink of a disaster. "Large portions of the estate were held by the Baboos and other relatives of the family as 'Khuro-pash', others had been mortgaged or granted as Putnee Talooks on very inadequate jummas to satisfy former claims, and in the portion which remained under the Raja the rents had

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.29.

3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.34, B.C.1501/58886.

4. Ibid. Para.37.

generally been collected in advance for one and two years."<sup>1</sup> Moreover to avoid the sale of their estates, the zamindars were still borrowing from the mahajans on most disadvantageous terms. No wonder, therefore, that these chiefs made a desperate bid to drive out the mahajans and to overwhelm the authorities, whose legal processes they skilfully used.

Yet another cause of the unrest spreading to some of these estates was the existence of family feuds in the zamindars' families. Like Barabhum, ~~Mambhum~~, Ambikanagar, Pachet and Dhalbhum suffered on this score.<sup>2</sup> In Pachet, especially, "the dissensions in the Raja's family were the chief cause of Gunga Narain being invited to visit the Pergunnah."<sup>3</sup>

Had there been an efficient system of police, the infiltration of the insurgents might have been checked. But the ghatwals who constituted the indigenous force were disgruntled by the presence of official police in most of the estates, and where the zamindar was the sole head of the police, he preferred to check the insurgents.

In Dhalbhum, as in Barabhum, a number of factors prepared the ground for the unrest. The elements of irritation and discontent against the prevailing system were the same as in the Jungle Mahals, but the peculiar local

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Paras. 30-32, and 42.

3. Ibid. Para. 30. The brothers, uncle and other relations did not like the dominance of the rani and her favourite young diwan, and they even alleged a criminal connection between the two.

problems were many.

This estate had also been exempted from Regulation 22 of 1793 regarding the police darogas, and Regulation 2 of 1816 and 12 of 1817 regarding qanungoes, but all other regulations were applicable to it. The result was that non-tribal excise and salt officers oppressed the tribal people at their will, since the district authorities hardly ever cared to visit this distant, inaccessible area. Worse still proved the influx of outsiders encouraged by the zamindar's family after its hinduization, to which some reference has already been made. To cap all, from 1825 onwards there was a minority. The Court of Wards entrusted the management of the estate and police to the minor's uncle, the Bara Thakur Jugal Kishore, while another uncle, Narsingh Dhal was given charge of the person of the young raja.<sup>1</sup> Divided responsibilities caused many evils, for Jugal Kishore proceeded to dismiss the old and trusted diwan, Gadadhar Panigrahi, and his assistants, so as to entrench his own power with the aid of agents brought in from outside, while Narsingh, to secure his position, pandered to the pleasures and passions of the young raja.

This state of confusion went on even when Chitreswar

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.42, B.C.1501/58886. Also see Petition, Tarni Singh (the son of Bahadur Singh who was murdered by Raghu Nath Singh of Dampara) of Pyraghon taraf, Appendix 8, Ibid.

Dhal attained his majority in 1829 and the Bara Thakur was removed from his post. The young raja could not break the undue influence of the Bara Thakur, get hold of the official seals, or find and appoint an able and honest diwan and naib. "The weakness of the young Raja's intellect and his utter unfitness for all business, rendered him still the tool of his crafty and designing uncle."<sup>1</sup> This led to a family feud. The raja, who had now fallen into the hands of intriguing advisers as scheming as his uncle,<sup>2</sup> tried to coerce the chief of Ballaipahari, who had been paying the rent to the Bara Thakur, to pay it directly to him. The sar-dar, presumably at the instigation of the Bara Thakur, called in the Barabhum insurgents to defend himself. Dent rightly thought that the Bara Thakur, who had taken possession of 60 or 70 villages and four stone quarries, was at the back of this move.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the Bara Thakur directly accused the raja of complicity in the crimes<sup>4</sup> and of having personally had a hand in inviting the insurgent chiefs to enter the pargana. But the trial of the raja and his brother Rup Babu on the charge of having murdered two individuals and of having had his tribal drums repaired with their skin, revealed that the

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.41, B.C.1501/58886.

2. One such person was Madhu Thakur, who, according to the Bara Thakur, advised the raja to oppress the traders of stone-quarry at Ballaipahari, and to insult the Santhal ryots there: Petition, Thakur Jugal Kishore, Appendix No.5, Ibid.

3. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.50, Ibid.

4. Petition, Thakur Jugal Kishore, Appendix No.5, Ibid.



Bara Thakur had conspired to implicate the raja in order to get possession of the estate.<sup>1</sup> He had been helped by Daroga Nitai Singh in this conspiracy on the promise of a reward. The judge recorded, "Of the enmity of the Bura Takoor, and of the Darogah Netaie Sing, towards the Rajah, there can be no doubt ... I have no doubt in my mind, that it was this enmity which caused this prosecution, and as little doubt that it was the real cause of the chooaree having extended to Dulbhoom."<sup>2</sup>

That the Bara Thakur should have so acted as to implicate the raja<sup>3</sup> made more probable because the raja had recently begun to curb his power. The raja's accusation<sup>3</sup> against the Bara Thakur of actually extending the invitation to the insurgents to come over to Dhalbhum may not be correct, but Dent's surmise that the Bara Thakur, being an ambitious and avaricious person, might well have tried to get rid of the raja<sup>4</sup> seems to be logical. Tarni Singh and Atma Ram of Pyraghori and Kalkapur respectively emphatically stated that the Bara Thakur had a regular understanding with the chuars.<sup>5</sup>

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1. A.Dick, Sessions Judge, Midnapur, to Govt., 26 July, 1833, B.C.1502/58892.

2. Ibid. Capt. Wilkinson, however, thought that though the Bara Thakur, because of his peculiar character, might be suspected of encouraging the woman to prefer the charge of murder against the raja, the daroga could not be suspected of being an accomplice in this conspiracy: Wilkinson to Govt., 12 Aug. 1833, B.C.1502/58892.

3. Petition, Raja Chitreswar Dhal, Appendix No. 6, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

4. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Ibid.

5. Petition, Tarni Singh, Appendix 8, Ibid.

Raj Narain Ghose, the salt daroga, also wrote that he had encouraged the chuars. Lastly, Lt. Timins, commanding a force in Dhalbhum, reported that the Thakur had thwarted some of his measures for apprehending the chuar leaders.<sup>1</sup> The weight of evidence and opinion would seem to prove that the Bara Thakur was indeed in league with the chuars.

As for the accusation against the raja, he got a clean acquittal on the charge of murder, but two charges were proved against him: firstly, that he gave arms and food to the chuars when they came over to Narsing-garh, and secondly that he gave the jagir of Dampara to the rebel leader Raghu Nath Singh at the orders of Ganga Narain.<sup>2</sup> But a weak and docile creature such as the raja was only too likely to have yielded to this extent under threats of fire and sword.

The Judge, Dick, wrote, "the extension of the late chooaree as [or] Jungle insurrection into Dhoulbhoom I attribute solely to the family feuds of the zemindar."<sup>3</sup> But he was surely wrong. A fuller explanation of the long support given to Ganga Narain by the Dhalbhum sardars and masses is required. Lt. Timins, from personal enquiry, held that the real cause of the discontent and rebellion was the oppression

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1. Timmins to Jt. Commissioner, 8 Jan 1833, Appendix 7, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  2. Petition, Thakur Jugal Kishore, Appendix No.5, Ibid. Also see Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Dick to Dent, 26 July 1833, B.C.1502/58891.

of the Bara Thakur and his puppet Muslim diwans.<sup>1</sup> These men had "deprived of their lands certain ryots who had possessed them for generations."<sup>2</sup> They had also hit the whole body of the people by enhancing salt prices, in collusion with the salt darogas. Salt formerly available at 6 or 7 seers a rupee could not be held at less than three or four seers a rupee, once they were installed in power.<sup>3</sup> When the tribal people cut their salt consumption, the darogas put pressure on them, threatening them with the collector's displeasure if they did not use more.<sup>4</sup> Orders were issued in the name of the raja that his twelve taraf-sardars must increase consumption, and the salt-darogas laid down that each ryot must take  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tolas a day.<sup>5</sup> To secure exemption from such impossible orders they had to offer substantial bribes to the officials.

There was indeed a thoroughgoing system of organised extortion. The salt darogas when they gave a retail licence to a village mutia, refused to allow anyone else to sell salt.<sup>6</sup> The retailers had therefore to bribe the darogas to give them a licence, and to overcharge the ryots to recoup themselves. Thus Ganga Ram Das Mutia testified that he had

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2. Appendix 7, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Appendix 8, Ibid, Two specific cases of dispossession of Runu and Kurunga sardar are cited in Appendix 7, Ibid.

3. Appendix 7, Ibid.

4. Statement of Abhiram Patnaik, former servant of the raja, Appendix 9, Ibid.

5. Appendix 11, Ibid, Also statements of 109 persons, Wilkinson to D'Oyly, 2 May 1833, Appendix 12, Ibid.

6. Ibid.

had to pay Rs. 7 salami to the salt-daroga<sup>1</sup>, besides the annual eight annas or one rupee dasturi which the daroga exacted from all mutias.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the salt chaprasis (peons) levied a dasturi of one rupee per village per annum and three to four rupees from each mittia.<sup>3</sup> They also took from each ryot one seer of rice and one fowl per month, and at the close of each year eight annas to one rupee from each.<sup>4</sup>

The Bara Thakur not only shared the illegal incomes of the salt-darogas and retailers,<sup>5</sup> but also took similar advantage of the abkari or liquor tax. It was Bara Thakur who extended this tax to hanria (the home-made rice beer of the tribal people). He gave the farm to one Ketu Modak who, "agreeably to a hint from the Bura Thakur, forcibly collected Handeea Puchae from Bhoomijees, Sountals [Santhals] and others at the rate of land 2 Rupees per village."<sup>6</sup>

Besides these, several abwabs were collected from the ryots, by the non-tribal diwans and fortune-seekers. Thus, Pheru Pandya introduced a Sonea (Sobha) Salami or Ind Salami in the time of Raja Baikunth Dhal, and a Bara

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1. Statement, Ganga Ram, Appendix 10, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Appendix 9, Ibid.

3. Appendix 10, Ibid.

4. Wilkinson to D'Oyly, 2 May 1833, Appendix 12, Ibid.

5. According to Dent, "the money thus obtained instead of being employed in liquidation of the arrears of revenue, and the debts of the minor Raja, was squandered away by his manager or found its way into the pockets of that manager's dishonest and greedy dependants." Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.44, B.C.1501/58886.

6. Wilkinson to D'Oyly, 12 May 1833, Appendix 12, Ibid. Also see Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.42, B.C.1501/58886. Also Appendix 11, Ibid.

Thakur Salami during the regency of the Bara Thakur, while Shamshir Khan introduced a diwan dasturi.<sup>1</sup> These innovations were much resented by the people, but neither the collector nor the Court of Wards ever attempted to check such extortion. Since the amlas and the surbarakar (the Bara Thakur) always represented that their actions were sanctioned by the Government, the tribal people naturally despaired of securing justice and revolted as a gesture of despair. Lt. Timins rightly stated, "the people have been driven to revolt by cruel oppression, the Government has been a charge and burden to them instead of a protection and it cannot be wondered at these causes producing refractory subjects and rebellion. The discontent and rising of the people will cease as soon as the corruption carried on in the name of Govt. ceases. When that is checked and the grievances of the people listened to and redressed, tranquillity will prevail."<sup>2</sup> Captain Wilkinson also thought, "it is quite out of the question that the ryots should patiently submit to such gross and weighty oppressions."<sup>3</sup>

For all these ills the district authorities provided no remedies. The rapacity of the Bara Thakur was left untrained, just as Madhava Singh's had been in Barabhum.

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1. Wilkinson to D'oyly, 2 May 1833, Appendix 12, Ibid. Moreover, Patnaiki dasturi (probably in the name of Abhiram Patnaik, a peshkar of the raja) was levied: Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.42, B.C.1501/58886. Also Hakimi dasturi : Ibid. para.60.
  2. Appendix 7, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Wilkinson to D'oyly, 2 May 1833, Appendix 12, Ibid.



Agents though they were for minor or incapable rulers with whom the Company was in treaty relations, they were allowed to enhance rents, establish new cesses, and use their official positions to make private fortunes. No restraint was placed upon the outsiders, Hindu or Muslim, who became diwans, salt traders, liquor merchants or usurers. Little supervision was exercised over the exercise of their authority by the Company's own private officials.

From the Company's point of view such neglect of moral duty might still have been productive of no great ill had the growth of tribal grievances been matched by the growth of adequate coercive power in the hands of the district officials. But in 1831, the police force was powerless of itself to deal with a general rising, and by that date the Company had largely withdrawn its regular troops from the Jungle Mahals.

The tribal or ghatwali police, which Henry Strachey, the Midnapur magistrate, had first restored in 1800, and which had been confirmed by Regulation XVIII of 1805, proved a broken reed in 1832. That followed from the fact that they themselves were very often the principal sufferers from the alienation, by hinduization, of their nominal leaders, the rajas and zamindars, and from the greed of moneylenders and revenue farmers. Indeed the ghatwals of Barabhum represented that they were the victims of oppression "to such an extent, that they were actually forced to sell the rings

from the fingers of their wives and daughters."<sup>1</sup> Naturally enough, a majority of them joined the rebels in the early stages of the unrest, and even those who at first helped the authorities could not long resist the pull to join their brethren.

As for the regular police under the darogas, first introduced in 1793, they failed miserably. A daroga from upcountry, with a handful<sup>d</sup> barkandazes, set in a hostile, unfamiliar country with an unhealthy climate, could do little. In 1799 the Barabazar daroga and his sebundy sepoy had been so terrified that they had absolutely refused to afford any protection to Bansi Maiti, the diwan whose life was threatened.<sup>2</sup> Again in 1805 the Radhanagar daroga showed himself helpless in the face of the depredations of the Bhumijs sardars.<sup>3</sup> In 1814 the Jungle Mahals magistrate admitted that because of the turbulence of the tribal people and the inaccessibility of their retreats the official police could do nothing to control them.<sup>4</sup> Yet, though they were useless in a crisis, they were retained in being, side by side with the ghatwali police, a constant irritation to the

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1. Letter from Camp Barabazar, 24 May 1832, India Gazette, 30 May 1832.
  2. Deposition of Agha Mohammad, Thanadar of Balrampur, Beng. Cr. Judl.Cons. 9 of 10 May 1799 ( $\frac{128}{41}$ )
  3. Petition, Daroga Janmayjai Ghose, Recd. 17 June 1805, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 4 of 27 June ( $\frac{129}{14}$ )
  4. Beng. Cr. Judl.Cons. 48 of 29 Apl. 1814 ( $\frac{31}{37}$ )

the ghatwals, and hated for their petty tyrannies and exactions by the Bhumijes whom they could not, in the event, control. They were the first target of attack by the tribal rebels, and, as the Government said, "the reports from this district exhibit the police during the period under review in a very unfavorable [sic] light".<sup>1</sup>

Despite the known inefficiency of the thana police - most strikingly demonstrated when they were left to hold the fort alone during the rainy season of 1832 - the regular troops who should have backed them up, had by 1831, largely been withdrawn. In a minute of 6 August 1832 Blunt stated the position clearly. The security of the British empire in India depended, he argued, "wholly upon the strength and fidelity of our military Establishments", for "the turbulent and disaffected are incited to disturbance and revolt by the absence of all military protection or of even the appearance of a military force or any measures of re-enforcing obedience to the civil authority."<sup>2</sup> The barkandazes, as substitutes for sepoys, he thought, "are regarded by the natives with derision and contempt, and with no other means of preserving the peace and good orders of our possessions, the safety of the state might be exposed to imminent hazard ..."<sup>3</sup> In his

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1. Govt. to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 20 March 1832, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 5 of 20 March 1832 (140<sub>5</sub>)

2. Blunt, Minute, 30 Apl. 1832, Beng. Secret Cons. 8 of 6 Aug. 1832 (367<sub>3</sub>)

3. Ibid.

days as magistrate in the Jungle Mahals<sup>1</sup> "a subadar's party from the Ramgarh Battalion was stationed throughout the year, chiefly for purposes of police at Jeldah [Jhalda], where the country is open, well-cultivated and healthy."<sup>2</sup> But Bentinck's economy measures and the reduction of military establishments had involved the withdrawal of that force, and Blunt was left to lament that "the reduced strength of the Regiments of the line, and the objections which exist to the employment of the Regular Native troops on civil duties, whereby they are liable to be dispersed in small detachments over the country, together with the abolition of the provincial corps, have left the preservation of the peace of the country almost exclusively dependant on our stipendary police Establishments the inefficiency of which on any occasion of serious local disturbance has been sufficiently manifested."<sup>3</sup>

The knowledge that the regular troops in the area had been much reduced in strength may well have decided the Bhumijs to follow Ganga Narain's lead. "There can scarcely be a doubt, "Dent remarked, "that the Dhuls who are the same in nature, habits & manners, as all the other tribes in the Jungle Mahals, had viewed with an eye of interest the ~~inter-~~est the disturbances which successively agitated

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1. Apl. 1806 to Aug. 1810. Register of the E.I.Co's.  
servants, 35-36.

2. Blunt, Minute, 28 Jan. 1832, Para.13, B.C.1363/54227.

3. Blunt, Minute, 30 Apl. 1832, Beng. Secret Cons. 8 of  
6 Aug. 1832 (367)  
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Baumunghautty which adjoins them on the west, Chota-Nagpur<sup>0</sup> and the more immediate district of Burrabhoom, and that they were ready and ripe for revolt."<sup>1</sup> We have seen how much they had suffered, and, as Dent pointed out, they were not of a temperament "to sit easy under the deprivation of their estates."<sup>2</sup> They were ready, it was true, to pay quit-rents and occasional abwabs which might "add to the appearance and dignity of their Lord or master", but they could "not understand why the demand for excessive and successive subsidies should be made, and a failure to answer the demand be followed by sequestration of the lands" which had "always been considered their hereditary property."<sup>3</sup> When they realised that "they were trifled with" and that "their complaints were unattended to, their wishes disregarded and their wealth taken from them under false pretences [Rs. 40,000 by the Bara Thakur] it is scarcely to be wondered at that they at length took a part in the disturbances going on around them."<sup>4</sup>

In fine, it may be stated that though the local problems in the estates of the Jungle Mahals and in Dhalbhum varied, the discontent against the system of administration was general. Wilson was right in asserting that "the cause of the rising of the chuars was ... the strong dislike

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1. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.54, B.C.1501/58886.

2. Ibid. Para.56.

3. Ibid. Para.56.

4. Ibid. Para.60.

entertained by the chiefs especially, for the judicial regulations of Bengal by which their rank was disregarded, their privileges circumscribed, their power impaired, and they were made personally amenable to the processes of the court and the authority of the police."<sup>1</sup> But he was surely wrong in dismissing the grievances of the tribal masses as unimportant and in admitting merely that "the people took part with their leaders."<sup>2</sup>

The Bengal Government had from the very beginning received proofs of the unsuitability of their regulations for this undeveloped area. But they did nothing more than tinker with remedies for a few evils. These people should not have been left untouched as anthropological specimens in their primitive system, but once outsiders had been appointed as police darogas, salt-daroga, etc., adequate safeguards and eternal vigilance by the higher authorities should have been provided.

The tribal peasantry of the western parts of the Jungle Mahals and of Dhalbhum in 1832 was seething with discontent against all foreign encroachments and anomalies. The Bhumij had been shorn of all the tribal privileges and immunities he had enjoyed in the past. He was looked down upon by the new masters, and was oppressed from all sides. Armed revolt represented his last bid to escape from the net closing round him.

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1. Wilson, Mill's History of British India, 1858, IX, 237.

2. Ibid.



## CHAPTER VII

### Nature of the Unrest - its victims

Thornton, Wilson and others voiced their belief that the events of 1831-33 were a mere spasmodic expression of tribal peoples' savagery and propensity to plunder. How far that was the case or not has already in part been discussed by a review of the connection of the tribal areas of Chota-Nagpur and the Jungle Mahals with the East India Company, of the outbreak of unrest and the manner and course of its suppression. A brief review remains to be made of just what the tribal people did when they broke out in violence and against whom their anger was directed. Such a review will show that they were indeed savage in their attacks upon their enemies, savage perhaps from despair of securing justice by peaceful and orderly means. But it will also show that the outbreak was not an unconsidered, spasmodic affair, but one very closely connected with the oppression which they had suffered. The tribesmen had no hope of redress because the police were base and corrupt, the lawcourt amlas were engaged in all sorts of illicit gains and the revenue officials tried to fleece them. Bribery was the accepted code of

conduct for these petty officials. In the face of this combined system of oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of property, abuse and personal violence and a variety of similar tyrannies, the tribesmen found no other alternative than to make a desperate attempt to escape from this galling situation. Their retaliation, therefore, was as violent and unprecedented as the oppressions on them had been.

Thornton described the risings as "an orgy of mutual slaughter, in which <sup>10</sup>the hand of every man ~~was~~ against his neighbour".<sup>1</sup> The Bengal Government noted of the rising that "During the whole of its course and progress, though perhaps in a less degree in Palamow than within the Chota Nagpore country, the worst excesses attended it. In the latter tract, from one part of it to the other, as the insurrection advanced, the people of the rude tribe of the Coles... sacrificed numbers of those who fell into their hands, to their excited passions of revenge and hatred."<sup>2</sup> There was a

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<sup>1</sup> Thornton, History of British India, V, 203

<sup>2</sup> Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832.  
B.C. 1362/54223.



sort of madness and blindness and they could no longer see the light of reason. The Patna commissioner, Master, reported the rising in lurid terms: "Restless, wild and ferocious, they rushed into an insurrection scarcely paralleled for ferocity and eager for plunder, universally prone to inebriation and infuriated by real or imaginary wrongs, the whole population yielded to the unobstructed tide of rebellion - fire, rapine and murder marked their paths, nor was their vindictive spirit confined to those to whom their injuries were ascribed, but madly extended to unoffending females and helpless infants with the subtle determination of extirpating the whole race."<sup>1</sup>

A number of the cases brought to trial revealed the savage nature of the attacks to which any who failed or were unable to flee were exposed. The commonest feature was the hacking to death of victims who were killed even though they made no resistance. One Dahi/r Singh was dragged out of hiding, given two sword cuts across his back, two on the neck and finally his head was struck off by a halwa.<sup>2</sup> Shaikh Sagar, found hiding in the jungle

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<sup>1</sup> Master to Govt., 17 Jan. 1833, para 13, B.C. 1502/58893. Also see Bentinck MS., Box 15.

<sup>2</sup> Master to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 22 Oct. 1832, Trial No. 7, B.C. 1502/58893. The handle of Gundas was always long, while shorter shafts of varying size were attached to halwa and fulan: Ibid. No. 6. See the photographs of these weapons in India Gazette Supplement, 20 March 1832.



was carried back to his village and there murdered by blows of a balwa.<sup>1</sup> In Jhiko chatti, a father and son were pulled from their hut, mercilessly beaten, and finally killed by having their heads hacked off with balwas. The headless trunks were then dumped before the house which the police officer had occupied.<sup>2</sup> At Tiko<sup>0</sup> six unhappy creatures, discovered sheltering in a hut were "cruelly and wantonly butchered"<sup>3</sup> in another case a Muslim family of eight, "male and female, one advanced in years, several in the bloom of youth, and some in unconscious infancy", was completely annihilated. The husband of a poor female "had a rope of straw twisted round his neck by which he was forcibly dragged from his house and taken to the bed of a river at a short distance followed by his distracted wife... Chugroo with a Bulva severed his legs from his body. In this mutilated condition he was able to exclaim, 'you are resolved on my destruction. Kill my wife who stands there weeping', on hearing which a third accomplice ... cut off the sufferer's head with a sword".<sup>4</sup> Women, children, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. No. 13

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. No. 16

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. No. 33

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. No. 103



aged, none were spared. One woman's head was cut off "to be presented to a Deota [God]",<sup>1</sup> and there were half a dozen cases of infants and babes in arms being killed.<sup>2</sup>

Cases of treachery and brutality were in fact very common during the unrest.<sup>3</sup> In one instance a non-tribal family, which had returned from pargana Jashpur after supposed tranquillity, was offered pretended hospitality by a Kol and then the head of the family was murdered in cold blood.<sup>4</sup> In another instance the insidious information being conveyed to a secluded party in the hills, the family began its return journey. But no sooner had a member of the family approached the village than he was wounded severely and the assailants "then seizing his arms and legs dragged him to a well into which they threw him and heaping upon him earth and stones thus terminated the wretched man's existence."<sup>5</sup> In yet another instance a pahan, who had taken five rupees as the price of protection of lives and property of a family, shamelessly assembled the Kols and attacked the victims.<sup>6</sup> At one place,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. No. 27

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Nos. 65, 68, 91, 94, 109, 102.

<sup>3</sup> There was at least one instance of benevolence on the part of a tribesman who concealed and fed a non-tribal man for several days before he was discovered and killed most brutally by the other tribesmen. Ibid. No. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. No. 106. Also see No. 64 for a similar case.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. No. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. No. 125.



after the male members of a party had been killed, fire was set to a house in which their women and children had taken refuge, and when these attempted to escape they were all murdered. The last member of the group, a young man, who had hidden up a tree, was dealt with by cutting down the tree and hacking him to pieces on the spot where he fell. Seventeen people in all were killed by fire and sword on this occasion, in a case which the commissioner of circuit rightly described as pre-eminent in atrocity. It exemplified, he wrote, "in the strongest light the licentious appetite of the insurgent Coles for the blood of all foreign settlers and the systematic study of massacre which was pursued during the rebellion".<sup>1</sup>

The murders committed were most numerous in the BARAKAS of Deesa and Korambi, because the non-tribal people of this area were quite unprepared for the attack. Moreover, it had been at Churia, Chutia, Barkagarh and other such important places that the non-tribal merchants and moneylenders had mostly resided and so the vengeance of the Kols became most apparent there. "The sight most humiliating to our Government that I have ever witnessed", wrote Sutherland, "was such of the inhabitants of these places as had returned standing with their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. No. 32. One of the murdered women was pregnant.



children in the midst of this scene of desolation with occasionally an old man or woman whose infirmities had prevented their accompanying the rest of their flight, and who, by the savages, had risen to desolate their houses and ravage their fields, had been tortured or burnt to the verge of death - all calling in one loud voice for redress of the grievances they had suffered, and in reproaching our Government for having left them unprotected. They were told, not in scorn, that their Rajah [maharaja] should have protected them, and they replied significantly enough, we had no Rajah".<sup>1</sup>

As compared to this awful tale of misery in Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies, the estates on its fringe suffered much less. In Raigarh in the north it was limited to the plunder of a few villages in Goia paraganas, because of the activity of the Raja of Raigarh.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in the small portion of the Jungle Mahals in the east, Patkum and Naala "suffered severely, Bagsoondie and Torong but slightly. The injuries committed have been plunder and destruction of property, but generally accompanied with wanton murders or atrocities."<sup>3</sup> The houses of no less than 40 moneylenders

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<sup>1</sup> Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C. 1363/54227

<sup>2</sup> Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para 25, B.C. 1502/58891

<sup>3</sup> Govt. to Bredden, 15 May 1832, B.C. 1363/54226.



and other non-tribal people were plundered and burnt in the village Klu alone, besides eight in the neighbouring villages and four in Torang.<sup>1</sup> Six of the houses burnt in Patkum belonged to the non-tribal employees of the zaminder.<sup>2</sup> (They had presumably, made themselves obnoxious to the tribesmen during the minority of the raja).

As in Patkum and other estates to the east of Chota-Nagpur, so in Palamanu and Tori to the west of it, the insurgents of Chota Nagpur first entered and fired the faggots. But once the Cheros and Kharwas were excited, there was the same melancholy tale of plunder, arson and murder. Through the whole of February 1832, these areas were in chaos and confusion. "Of the state of Torce", wrote Neave on 23 February, "I am at a loss to give any account save that it is in a state of complete disorganization ... the villages are fired, and the roads are blocked up and all passers are plundered".<sup>3</sup> On the same day Col. Hawtrey wrote that several villages in that pargana "were plundered and burned" south of his camp."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Govt. to Braddon, 15 May 1832, B.C. 1363/54226.

<sup>2</sup> Russell to Braddon, 16 Apl. 1832, ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, Para. 27, B.C. 1362/54223.

<sup>4</sup> Hawtrey to Jt. Commissioners, 23 Feb. 1832, B.C. 1362/54225



Near Udaiganj thana also he found the same scene of desolation - all the adjacent villages having been burnt by the tribal people.<sup>1</sup>

Four thanas of Palamau, Tarhasi, Lesliaganj, Shahpur and Gurhwa were affected, but the first two were most hard hit. A thousand houses were burnt in all.<sup>2</sup> The Government loss was much larger than that of any individual, both as to the number of villages injured, and the extent of injury in each. This was because most of the foreign settlers were living in the Government villages. As in Patkum and its neighbourhood, the Chero and Kharwar rebels also "burnt one or two houses of their own villages in order to give an idea that they were themselves sufferers and not the inflictors of injury"<sup>3</sup> Thus, Latchar, Satbarwa and Mankeari, situated in the midst of the clusters of villages inhabited by Chero, Kharwars and others, were partially destroyed. But in the villages with a mixed population, none of the houses of the tribesmen was touched. Most of the persons murdered were the non-tribal servants of the ex-raja and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, Memo to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apr. 1832, B.C. 1363/54228.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



the influential jagirdars who had tried to fight the rebels. But ~~strong~~ killing of sweet-meat-sellers, farmers of pounds, traders, and muslim adventurers was also reported.

Unlike the trial cases of Chota-Nagpur, those of the Jungle Mahals and Bhaibhum do not smack of heinous murders and atrocities on women, old men and children. But a few stray cases of murder there certainly are. For example, three Brahmans were killed by Gardi Munda in Bhaibhum,<sup>1</sup> and the raja of that estate and his brother were suspected of having lynched two people.<sup>2</sup> A few people were also killed in the attacks on Barabazar, Ambikanagar, etc. Moreover, some individuals were killed for spying on behalf of the authorities or for helping them in other ways.<sup>3</sup> The most common offence was the plunder of cattle and property, but that too was reduced to the minimum after the intensive operations by the troops.

The official returns of persons murdered in Chota-Nagpur show that 219 Hindus and 76 Muslims fell a victim to the tribal wrath, besides 7 Hindus and 2 Muslims killed in Doma.<sup>4</sup> But the joint commissioners admitted

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<sup>1</sup> D'Oyly to Wilkinson, 24 Dec. 1832, B.C. 1502/58889

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VI, p. 509

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter V.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C. 1502/58891.



that the returns of Doss were partial and of Barwa and Barkagarh no returns were received. Again, though the number of houses burnt in Chota-Nagpur proper was officially put at 4,086, the number of cattle seized at 17,058 and the quantity of grains burnt at 822,992 maunds,<sup>1</sup> the report seems to be partial. A contemporary newspaper report rightly noted, "it is impossible to calculate the number of men murdered, villages burnt, and property destroyed or pillaged... Nagpore, from being a flourishing pergunnah, has now been rendered a desert, and years will not suffice to restore its pristine prosperity."<sup>2</sup>

It is unnecessary to give other details as examples of the violence of the rising in Chota-Nagpur and Palawan and to a lesser degree, in the Jungle Mahals. Those which have been listed show the pattern of behaviour of the tribal people. The terror such actions spread can well be imagined, and from the earliest stage those who feared that they were possible victims could be found on the move, carrying off such valuables as they could. Their flight undoubtedly served to set off yet wider movements of non-tribal people, and so to spread the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Report from Sherghati, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 Feb. 1832.



atmosphere of uncertainty and excitement. It also served to rouse hopes of plunder among the tribal people through whose midst they had to pass and so in places gave to a movement begun as a rebellion against oppression the air of ordinary banditry.

Several methods were adopted by the tribal leaders to spread the rising: one was the beating of the nagaras or great drums, another the circulation of a 'dheori' (a branch of a tree, usually mango), which was "despatched from one party of Coles to another as a signal for them to join expeditiously and to engage in any contemplated exploit,"<sup>1</sup> a third was to circulate arrows of war.<sup>2</sup> The villages which wished to join those by whom the arrows were sent, were required to return these arrows whole, and those who wanted to oppose them were to return them broken. This was, in fact, a custom of the Larka Kols of Singhbhum, and had never before been generally adopted by the Dhanger Kols of Chota-Nagpur.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Master to Registrar, Nizamut Adalat, 22 Oct. 1832, Case No. 22, B.C. 1502/58893

<sup>2</sup> Statement, Singrai, Enclosure, Russell to Govt., 18 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54226

<sup>3</sup> Sutherland to Govt., n.d., para 8, B.C. 1363/54227



In the first phase of unrest, however, this practice began in the Sonapur pargana, and arrows later circulated throughout Chota-Nagpur, "accompanied with a notice to all foreigners to quit, and threatening messages to those who might remain or offer opposition."<sup>1</sup>

The obvious nature of the tribal people was to so terrorize the non-tribal settlers as to make them abandon everything and flee from the whole tribal area. In the large village of Patta Hasla, in Bagmundi, for example, the zamindar's brother connived with the kurais or tribal headmen to circulate an arrow of war and to spread rumours that the Kols were coming soon to kill the mahajans. This led to the flight of the non-tribal settlers, and their property was plundered at will. Then they burnt the whole village as a cloak to their actions. Moreover, when the non-tribal refugees with their few portable possessions reached the village where the zamindar's brother lived, the latter blackmailed them out of several articles worth Rs. 140 and "by means of his servants and dependents plundered them of their remaining property on the following night, all of which were conveyed to his residence."<sup>2</sup> Others who took shelter in two or three villages in the neighbourhood

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54226.



were similarly robbed. In Patkun and other neighbouring parganas there was likewise much despoiling of those who were fleeing from Tamar and Chota-Nagpur, or of those who sought to escape when the Kols crossed into the Jungle Mahals. Indeed the first phase of the unrest led to a serious refugee problem in the neighbouring areas.

(Some of the refugees found they had escaped the frying pan only to fall into the fire - the refugees from Tamar were relieved of all their belongings in Patkun). Several Calcutta papers described the sad plight of the refugees fleeing with their families from place to place in a state of greatest want: "It is a matter of regret that of these victims many perished from want of food, as the Coles have studied to destroy all the grain which they were unable to carry off."<sup>1</sup>

The spread of the insurrection so quickly and so widely was only made possible of course by the absence of any effective check. The result was most shocking. As a newspaper correspondent noted, "Chota Nagpore is completely sacked by this semi-barbarous race, who have succeeded in fighting and dusting the respectable and higher class of people, and are themselves the Malliks

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<sup>1</sup> Report from Camp Pitoria, 28 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 6 March 1832.



of the whole pergunnah."<sup>1</sup> Another correspondent put it, "Finding so little opposition in their attack, and the soldier's life to be 'a very merry kind of life, if taken smooth and rough', they proceeded from village to village burning and massacring every respectable person, and every foreigner, and forcing every Cole by the fear of instant death, to join their standards. Thus the fire of rebellion once lighted, the flames spread rapidly. The villages, ever ready to fly to arms, and bitter themselves at the experience of their less numerous and more peaceable superiors, eagerly seized their bows and arrows, and pursued a course of the most coldblooded and heartless barbarity, in which they received no check until the arrival at this place of ... the Joint Commissioners..."<sup>2</sup> As Sutherland said, "this insurrection had no limit but that which it found in the class of people by which it was instigated. Had the country between Chota Nagpoor and Calcutta on the one hand and Benares on the other, been inhabited by Bāngar Coles, the insurrection would have spread to those places."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Report in East Indian, n.d., quoted in India Gazette, 22 Feb. 1832.

<sup>2</sup> 'P', Pitoria, n.d., Bengal Hurkaru, 15 Feb. 1832.

<sup>3</sup> Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C. 1363/54227.



It was a consciousness of the lack of any effective power in the field to check the rebels which caused the unusual alarm. "It is impossible," wrote Russell, "to describe the terror and alarm occasioned by the disturbances throughout the district [Jungle Mahals]. In all the villages I passed through on my way to Patcoom, the inhabitants had dug large pits adjacent to their houses to conceal their effects in case of necessity".<sup>1</sup> Neave also reported from Palamau that though only a small portion of that estate was seriously affected, "yet the villages to the very northern extremity of the Pergunnah were usually deserted from fear"<sup>2</sup>. Rumours were at one time afloat that Mirzapur near Benares to the west of Palamau, had been sacked by the Kols on 2 February, and that disturbances had occurred at Azimgarh. On 3 February it was reported to the Meerut Observer that for the last ten days the town of Mirzapur and the surrounding area was "thrown into fearful consternation by the intelligence of a body of men to the amount of 5 or 5000 being assembled at a short distance, carrying plunder and rapine before them, and leaving desolation and misery in their rear."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para 15, B.1363/54226.

<sup>2</sup> Neave to Jt. Commissioners 28 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/65228.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in India Gazette, 8 March 1832.



The India Gazette noted in its editorial columns, "from Chota Nagpore to the frontiers of Oude there is a general commotion."<sup>1</sup> (Even the people of Benares were getting panicky lest they should be attacked by the Kols.<sup>2</sup> At one point it was rumoured that the Marathas were also joining the Kols from the south-west.<sup>3</sup>

The question naturally arises, with a rising so widespread, and a rumour even wider, whether it was an anti-British rising, an early independence movement. Was there any concerted plan to throw off the British yoke. Master, the Patna commissioner, argued that the Kols, who emigrated in vast numbers to Calcutta and other big cities in search of work, must have been familiar with the British enterprize, resources and power, and, therefore, they could never have thought of subverting such a power.<sup>4</sup> Metcalfe, perhaps voicing the opinions

<sup>1</sup> India Gazette, 9 Feb. 18. 1832, Editorial.

<sup>2</sup> India Gazette, 10 Feb. 1832, editorial.

<sup>3</sup> R.J.'s friend, quoted in 'R.J.' letter, India Gazette, 6 March 1832. There were some sceptics, however, who held that it was but a trifling affair: "a few cases of 'Hodge's Cordial' and some of 'Vansandye's best Chinsuhs'" would soon settle the insurgents: See 'P', Pitoria, 5 March 1832, John Bull, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 13 March 1832.

<sup>4</sup> Master to Govt., 17 Jan. 1833, Para 24, B.C.1502/58593 Also see Bentinck MS, Box 13.



of Sutherland, who had visited the area personally and submitted a long report, believed, however, that the insurrection really had originated in the spirit of independence... and [in] the belief that the opportunity of throwing off our yoke had arrived."<sup>1</sup> Blunt, as has been seen,<sup>2</sup> disagreed with this view. "Though the predatory habits of this people (habits which formerly prevailed more or less in all the Jungle Estates)", he remarked, "may have rendered them ready auxiliaries to their discontented neighbours in Sonapoor; but I cannot for a moment believe that either the Coles of Singhbhoon or Nagpoor could ever have entertained so wild a project (a project as far beyond their comprehension as their means) as that of subverting the British Empire".<sup>3</sup> He, therefore, believed that

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<sup>1</sup> Metcalfe, Minute, 14 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227. Sutherland thought that since the Kols "had made incursions into the foreign possessions of Patcoom on the one hand and Palamow on the other", and had "talked of Calcutta and the form of Government they were to establish", they had certainly a design to throw off the British yoke and "had they possessed either leaders or enterprise, they would undoubtedly have established themselves at our stations of Hazareebaugh, Sankeerah and Sherghetty, perhaps at Gya (Gaya), commanding the principal road between Calcutta and Benares and taking possession of some of the oldest territories of the Company". Sutherland to Govt. n.d., B.C. 1363/54227.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter IV, p. 345.

<sup>3</sup> Blunt, Minute, 4 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54227.



they had no design "beyond the immediate gratification of their revenge against those by whom they had suffered oppression".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it would seem clear that the ordinary mass of the tribal people were ignorant of the complex machinery of the British administration, scarcely knew a British official by sight, and were rising against such more immediate enemies, thanadas or salt darogas, moneylenders or thikadas.<sup>2</sup> These who would have gained most from the destruction of the Company's rule, the once-independent rajas and jagirdars did not, in the event, ally themselves with the tribal rebels, and though they would not take a risk and actually support the British officials, they stood neutral. Some, indeed, got the best of both worlds: they used the tribal unrest to free themselves from the clutches of the moneylenders, and then carried merit with the authorities by turning on the rebels. The Rani of Patkum, called 'the great Machiavelli' by one newspaper correspondent<sup>3</sup>, was particularly efficient

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> "It scarcely deserves the name of an insurrection when a body of men, goaded by the apparent want of redress, rose not against the Government, but against the zamindars, seeking 'the wild justice of revenge'. 'Kols of Chota Nagpore', Calcutta Review, XLIX

<sup>3</sup> 'old Grundy', n.d., India Gazette, 21 Feb. 1832.



in such double-dealing. She utilised the services of the Kols in ousting foreigners from her estate and plundering their property, and then had seventy-five of them arrested. The more important rulers in both the phases of the unrest apparently stood aside from the rebels; it was the minor jagirdars, the mankis and mandas who suffered with the common people at the hands of both outsiders and Company officials. An answer given by the noted leader Singrai to a question from Russell may serve as a more general answer. Russell asked whether the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur had said anything to him about fighting the Sahib Log, the British. He replied that the Maharaja had said nothing of that sort. The only statement that the maharaja had made to him was that he, the maharaja, would be answerable to the British authorities, and not the common people.<sup>1</sup> There was, then, nothing so grandiose about the various phases of the insurrection as a national rising to secure independence from the British. The enemy which was attacked was a more local and particular one:

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<sup>1</sup> Statement, Singrai, n.d. Enclosure Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, B.C.1365/54226. Russell, the Jungle Mahals magistrate was enraged by the supineness of the chiefs, and would have invoked the severest punishment permitted by the regulations upon the "many persons who ought to have come forward at once to support the civil authorities, and to check the system of plunder and outrages", and whom he held, probably mistakenly to have been "so criminally and deeply concerned in these transactions".



the outsider who had clamped himself like a leech on the body of tribal society, and the pithy, extortionate government official. The Joint Commissioners put it succinctly when in February 1832 they wrote "The whole of the Moondas and Coles who, we believe, compose about two-thirds of the population, have taken up arms against the respectable inhabitants of the country, burnt and plundered their houses and property, and expelled them."<sup>1</sup> Initially at least, plunder was not the main object of the tribesmen. Had it been then the Chota-Nagpur risings would surely have extended to the rich country across the Subarnarekha river, abounding in loot. Ordinarily, however, the insurgents did not move very far from their own villages, once they had cleared them of the objectionable foreigners. Sonapur was the one great exception for there most of the property and the cattle taken were carried off into the neighbouring areas of Singhbhum.<sup>2</sup>

Once the expulsion of the foreigners was well under way their property was of course thoroughly looted: "all the respectable looking houses in the villages have been previously burnt by the Coles,

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<sup>1</sup> Jt. Commissioners to Bowen, 9 Feb. 1832, Para 2, B.C. 1362/54224.

<sup>2</sup> Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para 23, B.C. 1502/58891.



and their own huts are filled with every species of grain which this province produces; and some of them are amply supplied with preserved mangoes, pickles ... and sundry other articles."<sup>1</sup> Major Sutherland commented, "They had enriched themselves with the spoils of their enemies, for such they considered all foreigners".<sup>2</sup> Revolt thus degenerated into banditry, the insurgent leader, Singrai, took from one money-lender, Santokh Sahu, no less than Rs. 2,000 which he had kept in salt bags.<sup>3</sup> Yet even in the later stages it is significant of the deep hatred of the foreigners that their houses, however valuable, were almost invariably destroyed by the tribal people, who seemed to wish to erase all signs of their hated presence among them. By contrast the property of the tribal chiefs was nearly always respected, though often enough after their hinduisation they had been ultimate origins of oppression. In villages with a mixed population, none

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Camp Pitoria, 13 Feb. 1832, John Hall, quoted in India Gazette, 22 Feb. 1832.

<sup>2</sup> Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C. 1363/54227.

<sup>3</sup> Statement, Singrai, Enclosure, Russell to Govt., 18 Apl. 1832, B.C. 1363/54226.



of the houses of the tribesmen were touched.

The unrest was then, in origin, a revolt of the dispossessed, of the keldas against their masters. Sutherland described the Chota-Nagpur insurgents, "intoxicated as they were with liquor, with success and rising as they did like a slave population on their taskmasters, numbers were massacred in cold blood; and perhaps no foreigner falling into their hands would have been safe".<sup>1</sup> The statements of both prisoners and victims show that the Oraons, Mundas, Mahlis and other Chota Nagpur tribesmen made the sudra their victims.<sup>2</sup> Moneylenders, merchants and shopkeepers, land-grabbers and tax-farmers, these were the people attacked - those foreigners who had been usefully integrated into the tribal economy, the chaukidars, milkmen, and artisans were generally spared. However, those who had sided with the foreigners, acting as their agents or spies, suffered like their masters. Birbal, the chaukidar of a village, who

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<sup>1</sup> Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C. 1363/54227.

<sup>2</sup> Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 26 May 1832, B.C. 1363/54229. Also see Abstract statement of prisoners, B.C. 1362/58893.



attempted to protect the property of a foreign thikadar of the village, was attacked, pursued and hacked to pieces.<sup>1</sup> Similarly a certain Monohar Singh was killed by the whole Kol population of a village because, as the prada or messenger of a sud landholder, he had the duty of seizing the Kol ryots for arrears of rent.<sup>2</sup> There were also examples of those who had been bond-servants seizing the chance to destroy their employers and their employers' families.<sup>3</sup>

The dealers in salt were another special target of attack, for they had excited the general anger of the people by selling this common necessary at an exorbitant rate. When the home of a family of salt-dealers was attacked and the assailants found that all but one old man, had fled, they first asked him to show them the spot where the salt was deposited, and then they killed him mercilessly.<sup>4</sup> So were the moneylenders, whose fleeced debtors took a savage

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<sup>1</sup> Master to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 22 Oct. 1832, Case No. 92, B.C. 1502/58893.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. No. 34

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. No. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. No. 108.

revenge. Dendra Tiwari, one such moneylender, was pelted with stones, and then severely wounded as he was, in cold blood was killed.<sup>1</sup>

The non-tribal landlords were the third group upon whom the Kols turned. There were numerous cases<sup>2</sup> of their revenue collectors and agents being brutally murdered. Even the servants of the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur were not immune if they were foreigners, and a number who had harassed the ryots were killed and their property looted.<sup>3</sup>

In Palamau again the destruction of "Mahajuns and foreigners engaged in commercial transactions"<sup>4</sup> was a prominent feature. Once again, too, the foreign servants of the ex-rajah and the leading jagirdars, muslim adventurers and the like, were singled out for attack.

Though the second phase of the unrest was less violent, once again the non-tribal intruders became a special target of attack in almost every estate. In

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. No. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Nos. 9, 151.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Nos. 11, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Noave to Govt., 29 March, 1832, Para. 2, B.C.1363/54228.



Barabazar, for example, the Muslim settlers were especial targets of attack,<sup>1</sup> while the houses of the Sundis, Kalwars and other merchants and excise farmers, and those of Brahmans were indiscriminately attacked. There were, however, fewer such settlers in the Jungle Mahals, and there the noteworthy feature was the attack upon the amlas of the Company.

The Jungle Mahals were set afire by the murder of Madhava Singh in a private feud, but private feud soon became popular rising. Within a few days the police thana, the munsif's cutchery, and that of salt-Saroga at Barabazar had all been sacked. The munsif's peons were killed, and an effort made to capture the police officer.<sup>2</sup> In all this the ghatwals took the lead, as the mundas and mankia had so often done in Chota-Nagpur, for they had the same grievances against the law officers who enforced the claims of the usurer or rack-renting farmer.

They turned next against the official police thanass which had minimised the ghatwals' importance.

<sup>1</sup> An officer of the 50th N.I., Barabazar, 13 May 1832. India Gazette, 19 May 1832.

<sup>2</sup> Russell to Govt., 5 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887. See Chapter V.

Russell reported that they showed a particular "spite" towards the darogas.<sup>1</sup> As the insurgents advanced they sacked every police thana they visited - Barabazar, Ambikanagar, Raipur - while in Pachet they threatened all the three thanas. It was symbolic that Ganga Narain died in an attack upon a thana in Kharsawan. In Patkum also, as we have already seen, the newly established thana was a special target of attack.

It is perhaps necessary to admit that with the emergence of Ganga Narain as a major figure, the revolt did take a rather more political or 'national' aspect. Whereas the prisoners taken in the first phase could be charged with specific acts of local violence, in the second the charge was often of having aided and abetted Ganga Narain - Guni Sardar and Suri Naya, his advisers in several acts of murder and atrocity, Govardhan Bhumij who seized the envoy sent to negotiate with Ganga Narain and murdered him, Bauri Naya, an under-ghatwal who accompanied Ganga Narain's party to attack the troops at Barabazar in May, Buli Mahto and Jadre Bhumij who

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<sup>1</sup> Russell to Braddon, 11 May 1833, Ibid.



aided and abetted Ganga Narain in the murder of  
Madhava Singh.<sup>1</sup>

Again, where the attacks in the first phase had been upon tribal tyrants, and had been locally made, the insurrection begun in Barabhum soon spread all over the Jungle Mahals and Bhalbhum, and even into Singhbhum. Ganga Narain actively sought help in all the neighbouring areas and met with some success, and he sought that help in the case of his appeal to Thakur Cheton Singh by calling for aid in "avenging the insulted honour" of the zamindars.

Ganga Narain also exploited to the utmost the superstition and credulity of the simple tribal folk, by claiming to possess superhuman powers. He even went to the length of instilling "into the minds of the choosars the extraordinary idea that he possessed the power of enchanting the sepoy's and their muskets. This notion was implicitly believed by these credulous people and nothing excepting ocular demonstration would convince them to the contrary."<sup>2</sup> Consequently even when Ganga Narain was not present during an attack, the tribal

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<sup>1</sup> Trial cases. Enclosure, Despatch to Govt., 9 April 1833, B.C. 1502/58890.

<sup>2</sup> Report from Camp Barabazar, 15 May 1832, Bengal Hurkuru, 22 May, 1832.



people gave an impression that he was there.<sup>1</sup>

In both the phases of the unrest, the zamindars and the jagirdars were suspected of being in league with the insurgents. According to a newspaper report, "Perhaps with the single exception of Ajumber Sing (and probably Thakur Chetan Singh too), every other zamindar expects to be a gainer by the present disturbances, and it is thought ... that they would be extremely sorry to see Gunga Narain brought in a captive, since he might tell tales of some of them, which would go far to open the eyes of the Government to their duplicity."<sup>2</sup> Though the fact that so many of them were deeply in debt may explain their tacit support, it seems once again that there was in the Jungle Mahals a more concerted attack upon the administration. And once again Gunga Narain provided a focus for political as well as economic discontent, for he was closely related to many of the chiefs of the area.

One other factor helped to turn local expressions of grievance into something larger in scale. That was the bitterness caused by the unremitting and bloody repression by the regular troops in their second campaign. Far more than in the first phase there was in the Jungle Mahals campaigns an element of retaliatory retribution, and some

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Russell to Braddon, 13 July 1832, B.C.1501/58887.  
Also see Braddon to Govt., 28 July 1832, Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> 'John Kol', n.d., Bengal Hukaru, 16 Feb. 1833.

at least of the troops had already experienced one harassing, difficult campaign in Chota-Nagpur. Moreover, since the guides and interpreters attached to the corps were mostly non-tribal people, themselves seeking vengeance perhaps, it was easy to lead the troops, unwittingly, into unnecessary acts of vengeance. The heavy loss of life, not very discriminatingly inflicted, the thorough destruction of property, the capture of women and children - all these marked the second campaign. They seem rather to have stiffened than weakened the tribal will to resist. It is perhaps not without relevance that whereas in the first phase the Government offered a thousand rupees reward for the seizure of Buddhu Bhagat, five thousand rupees were offered for the apprehension of Ganga Warain.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The leaders in the first phase were mainly village or circle headmen - Sui Mundra, Singrai Manki, Bindrai Manki, etc. Buddhu Bhagat - in the second phase they were sardar phatwais and phatwais, and minor lagirdars and zamindars.



## CHAPTER VIII

### The Aftermath of the Unrest - I.

With the ending of military operations, first in Chota-Nagpur and then in the Jungle Mahals, it became necessary first to ensure a rapid return to normal economic life in the ravaged districts, and to make such minor security arrangements as would preserve that life in peace, then to decide how to reward the loyal and to punish the guilty, and finally to resolve all the conflicting claims between parties thrown up by the insurrection, or left unresolved because of it. Only when that had been done, and the reports of the officers had been digested, would it be possible to consider what changes in the administration of the tribal areas would be necessary to prevent in future such a growth of grievances as had been issued in violent rebellion between 1831 and 1833. The last two chapters of this thesis will deal the one with the immediate settlement which followed the ending of hostilities and the other with the larger reorganisation of the whole administrative system.

Earlier chapters on the military operations and upon the extent and nature of the unrest have dealt in local detail with the great destruction of life and property which took place during the risings and in the course of their suppression. Official figures, for example, gave the number of non-tribal people killed in Tori, Lohardugga, Sonepur,

Palkote, Tamar and Doma alone as 304.<sup>1</sup> Wilson in his edition of Mill, put the figure at over a thousand.<sup>2</sup> Probably both figures were underestimates many deaths being unreported in the long period of administrative confusion, when most officials had fled from their civil stations. On the insurgents' side losses were even heavier, though here again because of the tribes peoples' habit of carrying off their dead and wounded into the jungles,<sup>3</sup> no accurate total can be obtained. The loss of property was likewise very great, for large areas, especially during the rains, had been "almost entirely at the mercy of the insurgent chooars"<sup>4</sup> who had "sacked every place worth plundering."<sup>5</sup> As British authority was restored by military action, further material loss was inflicted, this time upon the tribal people, against whom the Hindu and Muslim troops acted in some measure as avengers of the 'foreigners' attacked by the Kols and Bhumijes. The destruction was so great as to rouse some disquiet among the officers engaged in operations,<sup>6</sup> and there was for a while a lively controversy in the Press. Some denounced the punitive measures: " ... the country is filled with blood-thirsty

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1. Appendix, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, B.C.1502/58891.

2. Wilson, Mill's History of British India, 1858, IX, 234, footnote.

3. Braddon to Govt., 6 Sept. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

4. Govt. to Braddon, 3 Aug. 1832, Ibid.

5. Dalton, Ethnology, 175.

6. See Chapters III and IV.

and plundering troops, and England the free, the noble England pours her legions into Nagpore, and empties the phial of her wrath upon the heads of the devoted and patriot Coles! These poor unfortunates are hunted from their villages to the jungles and from thence to the plains where they are massacred like beasts of the field."<sup>1</sup> To this those engaged in the suppression of the rebellion replied defensively, asserting "There perhaps never was an insurrection of such magnitude put down by a military force ... where recourse was had to so few measures of severity, or where there was so little sacrifice of life and property - yet these ... are the troops that Indian papers paint as ruthless savages, and these the measures that they describe in terms calculated to raise the indignation and contempt of all good men."<sup>2</sup> They also took a legalistic line: "I have yet to learn that the destruction of the supplies of every description which the insurgents had carried to their positions to enable them to protract their resistance, was not lawful, that the destruction of the habitations which they had there erected for their shelter was not lawful, and that the demolition of the villages in the immediate neighbourhood of their positions, which they had deserted, but where they found occasional shelter was not lawful likewise."<sup>3</sup> Others counter-attacked

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1. A paper said to be published in Chota-Nagpore, quoted in Bengal Hurkaru, 18 Apl. 1832.
  2. "M.N.", Barrackpur, 24 May 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 30 May 1832.
  3. Ibid.



the humanitarians, asking, "Is all the pity and compassion of the Bull's correspondent to be expended on these ruthless murderers, who spare neither women nor children...? Is no compassion to be extended to the hundreds, whom they have killed, whose blood cries for vengeance; to the orphan whom they have rendered fatherless and the widow whom they have made so. Is no one to feel for the thousands who block up the roads and villages with their starving families, who are wandering about without a morsel of food and perfectly destitute of the means of getting it?"<sup>1</sup> But whether excessive or justified, the destruction of houses, grains, equipment, cattle, etc. was certainly heavy: "so much blood has been shed, such almost irreparable ruin and devastation spread over a fine country which now is 'Greece - but living Greece no more."<sup>2</sup> The land could not be cultivated for want of seeds and bullocks, the crops were widely damaged and those that survived could not be harvested in time. "In every village," wrote Neave about Palamau, "the crops are standing ripe and there was none to reap them."<sup>3</sup>

The first task of Government, under such conditions was to restore order and restart the economic life of the area as quickly as possible. Even before the full pacification of Chota-Nagpur the local authorities had been

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1. 'Tee-to-Tum,' Bengal Hurkaru, 13 March 1832.

2. 'Jassooz', 9 Apl. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 30 Apl. 1832.

3. Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

instructed to seek to inspire confidence in the people.

"The main desire of the Vice President in Council respecting Palamau as well as other portions of territory in which there has been insurrection, is to re-establish tranquillity & secure good order for the future."<sup>1</sup> Major Sutherland,

Metcalfe's private secretary, stressed the need to prevent "further depression and degradation of the Cole population".<sup>2</sup>

"Whether we consider their number or look upon them as the productive and industrial classes," he wrote, "their appeal to arms having so far failed to obtain for them redress of those grievances which in their estimation had become intolerable, there will be a reaction against them .... They will, unless protected by the hand which has reduced them to subjection, ... be reduced in the first instance to a state of greater debasement than ever."<sup>3</sup> In the Jungle Mahals, as the leaders surrendered one by one in 1833, the same emphasis was laid upon reconciliation and rehabilitation in the devastated areas. Early in March a military officer, Lt. Timins, was saying "all that now remains to secure tranquillity to the country is to settle the Ryots again in their respective villages, and pardon those who have been concerned in the insurrection, making an example of some of the principal sirdars of choars to prevent others committing similar

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1. Govt. to Neave, 7 Apl. 1832, Para.2, B.C.1363/54228.

2. Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C.1363/54227.

3. Ibid.

offences."<sup>1</sup> Steps were accordingly taken to restore the thousands of maunds of grain and the cattle recovered from the insurgents to their rightful owners, so that cultivation might be got under way. (In Patkum alone 12 - 15,000 maunds of grain were recovered, and in Tamar 4,000 head of cattle.)<sup>2</sup> As police and other officials were again posted in the districts they were instructed to aid in the recovery and restoration of property - though with caution, for there were many claims and counter claims, and the tribal people frequently protested that they were "being deprived of all their own property after having given up their plunder."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed in May 1832 the squabbles about the restoration of property assumed such proportions in the Barkagarh area that it was thought necessary to post troops there to prevent "a partial rising, which might extend were not troops on the spot."<sup>4</sup> The hostility of the suds by the tribal masses was making it very difficult for the headmen and chiefs who had bound themselves at the time of their surrender to secure the restitution of all looted property within their villages. Moreover, the presence of troops, it was thought, would reassure the suds and encourage them to resume their normal occupations.

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1. Timins to Impey, 2 March 1833, B.C.1502/58890.
  2. Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.16, B.C.1363/54226. Also see Col Bowen to Jt. Commissioners, 11 March 1832, B.C.1362/54225.
  3. Jt.Commissioners to Govt., 6 May 1832, Para.5, B.C.1363/54228.
  4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 31 May 1832, Para.2, Ibid.

The officials were also ordered to "use their best exertions in concert with the landholders and heads of villages to preserve order and conciliate all classes."<sup>1</sup> Here Cuthbert gave a lead in trying to get those who had suffered at one another's hands to live again as good neighbours. (In May 1832 the joint commissioners had reported that the general convulsion had "completely disorganised society and destroyed all confidence amongst the different classes.")<sup>2</sup> Cuthbert called together the Chota Nagpur raja and the mundas and mankis of the five dependent parganas, giving them all a patient hearing, promising redress of grievances. "I have succeeded," he wrote, "in allaying old and bitter animosities and in persuading those to be reconciled to each other, whose enmities are as detrimental to their own interests as they are injurious to the peace and welfare of the country; I mean the Rajas and the Mankies and Moondas."<sup>3</sup>

As in one area after another military operations came to an end and troops were withdrawn, it became necessary to establish a transitional security arrangement to protect the new-found calm. One method of doing this was to establish small temporary posts, such as that at Barkagarh. In Palamau, for example, Neave dealt with the trouble spot of Latehar, by posting the daroga of Tarhasi there with a

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 6 May 1832, Para.5, Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.1.

3. Cuthbert to Govt., 24 Apl. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1362/54225.

dafadar and 19 barkandazes; he posted another dafadar's party at Satbarwa in Leslieganj thana and a party of barkandazes with the tahsildar of the khalsa mauzas or government villages.<sup>1</sup> Before long he could report the whole pargana tranquil and the villages busy with peaceful inhabitants. By July 1832 Government sanction had been received for these reinforcements of the police,<sup>2</sup> and for the building of the necessary accommodation for them.

In Chota-Nagpur proper, police amins with the necessary establishments were appointed at Lohardugga, Jhikochatti and Barkagarh and, for the dependent parganas, at Tamak.<sup>3</sup> The joint commissioners laid down that the amins should follow a conciliatory policy. The ilagadars, thikadars and other officials were to be restrained from using force in the performance of their duties. There was to be no arresting of persons on mere suspicion, and trifling cases of assault and theft should be settled by the local panchayats.<sup>4</sup> The amins were strictly warned against accepting gifts - of money or goods - from any one, and were ordered to prevent their subordinates from accepting any also. They were to maintain a diary, submit weekly reports, and work out tables showing the number of houses burnt, the amount of property plundered.

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1. R. Trotter to Jt. Commissioners, 18 June 1832, B.C.1363/54228.
  2. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 10 July 1832, Ibid.
  3. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 6 May 1832, Para.3, Ibid.
  4. Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 31 May 1832, Ibid.



the number of persons killed in their areas. All this was approved of by the Government and the extra expense agreed to, though the posting of a detachment of troops at Barkagarh was disliked. "A post of that kind once established there," the Government wrote, "afterwards [there may be] some risk and difficulty in withdrawing it and while continued it locks up a portion of our military force and tends to fritter the whole away in some detachments .....Our army is not sufficient to be provided a multiplicity of small detachments to be stationed on every spot where it may seem desirable to have troops."<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Government wanted "to keep its force collected in efficient bodies to be used where required than to scatter it in small parties, like so many Police Thannas, to keep the peace."<sup>2</sup>

Besides these official police posts the zamindari or ghatwali police was re-established wherever possible. As the tribal chieftains surrendered they were asked to enter into fresh agreements with the Company. Thus Singrai Manki of Sonepur pargana, when he surrendered in May 1832, executed a kabuliat with Kunwar Harnath Sahi promising to be alert in doing service and in looking after his pass, where no plundering or disturbance was to be allowed. He also undertook to obey all the Company's orders, to prevent the entry of

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1. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 17 May 1832, Para.4, B.C. 1363/54228.

2. Ibid.

3. Enclosure, Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 30 May 1832, B.C.1363/54223.

dacoits into the twenty-two villages in his charge, and to report all crimes to the police officers. Similar kabuliats were executed by Ghasi Manjhi, eight rautias and eight other mankis.<sup>1</sup> Even a leader like Bindrai was "coaxed and made much of, had a puggree [turban] given him and a cheroot",<sup>2</sup> and was pardoned and re-established in his old duties.

In other areas it was to the rajas and chiefs that police duties were re-entrusted. Palkote and contiguous parganas were left under the Raja of Chota-Nagpur, Sonepur under the Kunwar of Govindpur, Basia under the Kunwar of that place, and Barwa under its raja. All were to keep the higher authorities regularly informed of the real state of the country.<sup>3</sup> The Calcutta authorities were ready, indeed, to push such arrangements further. "In a country", they wrote, "where the land revenue is received by the Raja, and where we receive only such a portion on that account as may more properly be termed a tribute, it seems equitable that the Raja should be at the expense of keeping the peace and expedient to make over the territory at present to the sole charge of the Raja." Such a measure would have the great attraction of reducing government expenditure upon the police, which threatened to exceed the revenues drawn from the territory. It was also hoped that the influence of the

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1. Ibid.

2. 'The ghost of the sons of Singrae Mankee and Bindrae Mankee', Tartarus, Apl. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 14 May 1832.

3. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 6 May 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

maharaja, especially in the Palkote area, would lead to further recovery of property and an easing of the strain between the various classes of people.<sup>1</sup>

The various measures in Chota-Nagpur worked well, but with the signs of disturbance in the neighbouring Jungle Mahals they had to be extended beyond October - the date on which the extra police were to have been withdrawn. The officiating Ramgarh magistrate argued that "where a revolutionary spirit has so recently shown itself and where the lower orders have so lately learnt their own strength when opposed only by the ordinary police establishment the extra force cannot for some time to come with safety to the tranquillity of the pergunnah be dispensed with",<sup>2</sup> and the need to despatch a large part of the force of barkandazes from Tori to Barabhum in the Jungle Mahals reinforced the argument. The special arrangements were therefore extended by Government for another four months. They also promoted Lt. Ouseley, who had been acting as amin at Barkagarh, to be assistant to the joint commissioners, and to take over their supervision of Chota-Nagpur when in October they had to go to the Jungle Mahals.<sup>3</sup>

While the second phase of the unrest ran its course in the Jungle Mahals, Chota-Nagpur remained quiet. When the

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 31 May 1832, Ibid.

2. Trotter to Jt. Commissioners, 30 Oct. 1832, Para.1, B.C.1502/58893.

3. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 31 Oct. 1832, Ibid.

Mahals in their turn had been subdued by military operations, much the same problems again faced the joint commissioners - physical destruction to be repaired, the police system to be strengthened. Thus in Dhalbhum, where there had been a daroga and 128 barkandazes by the end of the operations, a smaller body of 48 barkandazes was posted at Narsing-garh, and a mere handful at the salt-chauki.<sup>1</sup> Although it seemed that the Dhalbhum raja had screened the insurgent leaders, it was recognised that "the Rajah in point of fact is independent in reality altho' subject to the jurisdiction of this [Midnapur] court nominally".<sup>2</sup> Alexander, the joint Magistrate of Midnapur, urged that control of the police be wholly entrusted to the raja. In April 1833 Wilkinson accepting the force of Alexander's arguments, restored the former police powers of the raja, taking a new Kabuliat from him.<sup>3</sup> In similar fashion the police of the Barabhum pargana were placed under the zamindar and his new diwan, who were strengthened in their authority by the retention of 50 men of the Bankura Levy at Barabazar and 40 at Ambikanagar.<sup>4</sup>

With order restored attention was turned to reward and punishment. Among the officials, Major Sutherland was the first to receive high praise for his zeal and public

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1. Wilkinson to D'oyly, 4 Apl. 1833, B.C.1502/58892.

2. Alexander to Hunter, 28 Feb. 1833, Para.7, B.C.1502/58890.

3. Wilkinson to D'oyly, 4 Apl. 1833, B.C.1502/58892.

4. Dent to Govt., 9 Apl. 1833, Para.8, B.C.1502/58890.

spirit.<sup>1</sup> Neave, the Acting Magistrate of Ramgarh, was thanked for his services, especially in procuring provisions for the troops.<sup>2</sup> Lastly Dent and Wilkinson, the Joint Commissioners, were thanked, the former perhaps less warmly than the latter. On the other hand Lambert at one stage had to supply a long explanation for having left the disturbed area, an explanation which was only grudgingly accepted, and Cuthbert, as has been seen, was bitterly criticized by Blunt, and was made something of a scape-goat by the joint commissioners.

It was then the turn of the subordinate officials of Chota-Nagpur. Neave asked that Shaikh Anwarullah, tahsildar of the Maharaja of Tekari, be rewarded for his "very great and important assistance" in providing supplies: "no method of securing the services of the people to Government," he urged, is "so sure and effectual as that of honorary rewards to those who deserve them."<sup>3</sup> As the Patna commissioner also warmly supported Neave's request,<sup>4</sup> the Government asked him to convey to the Shaikh their approbation and to present a pair of shawls or any other honorary distinction to the value of 300 rupees.<sup>5</sup>

Mitrabhan Singh, the zamindar of Deo, had rendered extraordinary services during the military operations, and

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1. Govt. to Sutherland, 3 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.

2. See Neave to Lambert, 30 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54229.

3. Ibid.

4. Lambert to Govt., 3 May 1832, B.C.1363/54229.

5. Govt. to Lambert, 15 May 1832, Ibid.



his zeal and loyalty were highly spoken of by the joint commissioners.<sup>1</sup> As his grandfather and father had also served the Company well, it was recommended that he should be granted an honorary dress of some splendour, with sword, string of pearls and so on, as well as some villages or a pargana, such as he himself had asked for.<sup>2</sup> To this, too, the Calcutta authorities agreed, though they were doubtful whether it would be easy to find a suitable pargana which could be granted without injury to the rights of others.<sup>3</sup> On the delicate issue of the value of the khillat, or dress of honour, the joint commissioners found a diplomatic answer, by making it the same as that conferred on Mitrabhan's father in 1816.<sup>4</sup>

Mirza Khan Bahadur Khan, an illegitimate son of Maharaja Mitrajit Singh of Tekari, then appealed for some recognition of his services in Palamau.<sup>5</sup> Since there was much official support of his claim to reward, it was agreed to confer upon him an honorific title. In his case, too, the exact form of the reward called for much consideration. After a lot of discussion as to whether a Hindu or a Muslim  
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title would suit him, the Governor-General finally authorized

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 May 1832, B.C.1363/54228.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 21 June 1832, B.C.1363/54229.
  3. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 30 July 1832, Ibid.
  4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 18 Aug. 1832, B.C.1503/58898.
  5. Petition, Mirza Khan, to Lambert, n.d., B.C.1503/58899.
  6. Lambert to Douglas, Judge of appeal at Patna, 15 Sept. 1832, Ibid. Also see Douglas to Govt., 24 Sept. 1832, Ibid. Also Govt. to Douglas, 8 Oct. 1832, Ibid. and Govt. to Douglas, 26 Nov. 1832, Ibid.

the title of Raja Khan Bahadur Khan Dilawar Jung.<sup>1</sup> An appropriate khillat was also forwarded from Calcutta - though for this the new raja had to present a nazar of equal value, i.e. 750 rupees.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the Maharaja of Deo had died,<sup>3</sup> and the question arose of the best form in which to continue his reward to his minor son. The grant of a pargana desired by the late Mitrabhan Singh seemed unsuitable, so a remission of revenue of a thousand rupees a year was made instead, confirmed by a sanad in perpetuity.<sup>4</sup> The more imaginative proposal made by Dent, that the sum might be spent in giving the boy a really suitable education was not adopted.

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1. G.G. to Raja Khan Bahadur, 20 Dec. 1832, Ibid. The letter read: "My friend, In consideration of the public services which have been performed on several occasions by yourself and your father Maharaja Mitterjeet Sing, I have resolved ... to confer upon you the dignity of Raja by name, style and title ...." Also see Notification, Vice President in Council, Political Deptt. 14 Jan. 1833, Ibid.

2. Govt. to Douglas, 4 Feb. 1833, Ibid.

3. Trotter to Dent, 8 July 1833, B.C.1502/58893.: "I cannot here avoid expressing my regret at an event by which a young man of the highest promise has thus prematurely been cut off and the district deprived of the good which must have resulted from his example and management." A military officer paid a tribute to Mitrabhan Singh in the following words, "I have been fortunate enough during my pilgrimage to the East to meet with several very worthy and estimable native gentlemen, but certainly none who surpassed, if equalled, ... Mittrbhan Singh .... I may with confidence appeal to my brother officers, and fellow sojourners in Nagpore, to bear witness to his courage, his kind and obliging disposition, his genteel manners and the total absence of scheme and strategem in his conduct ..." A Subaltern, op.cit. 187, Footnote.

4. Dent to Govt., 7 Oct. 1833, B.C.1502/58893. Also see Govt. to Dent, 23 Dec. 1833, Ibid.

Next came the question of rewarding the loyal jagirdars of Palamau. Neave had recommended in April 1832, that the Raja of Palamau, whose estate had been sold up, and purchased by the Government several years back, should be given back his estate as a reward for his services.<sup>1</sup> The joint commissioners were cautious about this and suggested that the feeling of the people of Palamau should first be ascertained.<sup>2</sup> Government agreed, stressing that it was particularly important to ascertain the inclinations of the principal jagirdars.<sup>3</sup> But ultimately the estate was retained by the Government.<sup>4</sup>

The other jagirdars were suitably rewarded at Trotter's recommendation since by rewarding them "their assistance and good faith may be more surely relied on in the event of any future insurrection in the pergunnah."<sup>5</sup> Their balances were written off,<sup>6</sup> those who had engaged extra troops etc. were re-imbursed, and an annual reduction of Rs. 240 was made in the revenue payable by Thakurai Chhatradhari Singh, Bhawani Baksha Rai and Thakurai Basant Singh, during their life-time.

One special award in Palamau was that of life

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1. Neave to Jt. Commissioners, 28 Apl. 1832, Para.8, B.C. 1363/54228.
  2. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 29 May 1832, Paras.3-4, Ibid.
  3. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 29 May, 1832, B.C.1363/54228.
  4. Bridge, Palamau Settlement Report, Para.82.
  5. Trotter to Jt. Commissioners, 17 Oct. B.C. 1502/58893.
  6. Khirodar Sahi, the chief of Chechari, was one of those who got such a remission:  
Beng. Rev. Cons. 62 of 20 Nov. 1832 (62)  
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pensions to the heirs of the ten persons killed at Latehar in action against the insurgents.<sup>1</sup> They received the standard rate under the pension rules of January 1831, of Rs. 2-8 annas a month - no very great sum for those who had left a number of dependents, though Trotter argued that living was cheap, and the persons were all men of no rank or position.<sup>2</sup>

When the second phase of the unrest drew to a close similar commendations and rewards were distributed to the deserving. Dr. Cheek - whose indigo factory had been destroyed - received great praise for his services to the troops, medical and otherwise, and he was granted an extra allowance.<sup>3</sup> Gadadhar Banerjee, who had been in charge of pargana Kasipur during the minority of the zamindar and then diwan to Dr. Cheek, and who was warmly praised by the Burdwan commissioner for "the interest he has evinced throughout the whole business, the correct information he has procured for me, and the valuable assistance I have obtained from him",<sup>4</sup> was similarly rewarded.

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 2 Nov. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1502/58893. The persons killed were Mansabdar Khan, Ismail Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan, Shoo Dayal, Biranchi, Dana, Jaggu, Surdha, Bechu Khan and Adhin Upadhyay.
  2. Trotter to Jt. Commissioners, 19 Oct. 1832, Ibid.
  3. Braddon to Govt., 6 Sept. 1832, Para.10, B.C.1501/58887.
  4. Ibid. Para.11.  
Also see Govt. to Braddon, 25 Sept. 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

Madho Das Mahapater<sup>†</sup> Bamanghati, who had come to the rescue of Subadar Mangal Singh of the 38th N.I. and Shuja'at Ali who had been so active in the attacks upon Ganga Narain,<sup>1</sup> were also rewarded, the latter by promotion to the post of amin.<sup>2</sup> Lt. Timins was also particularly praised for his "zeal, energy and judgment" during the Dhalbhum campaign.<sup>3</sup>

1. See Chapter IV, Pp. 432, 434 and 436
2. Dent to Govt., 18 Nov. 1832, B.C.1501/58888.  
One Srikanth Sharma, who later became the diwan of Barabhum, was also rewarded: Govt. to Dent, 13 May 1833, B.C.1502/58890. Moreover, ~~an~~ Dhalbhum Tarni Singh, son of Bahadur Singh who had been killed by Raghu Nath because of his loyalty to the British Government, was granted some remission in his revenue.: Wilkinson to Govt., 12 Aug. 1833, Para.8, B.C.1502/58892. Others who got pensions in this pargana were the widows of Kripa Baghal and Tulsi Das Bhisti who had been killed by the insurgents while carrying letters from Lt. Timins to Joint Commissioners: Rough Notes, Home Misc. No.724, p. 757.  
Lastly, the zamindar of Bagankodar got a remission of Revenue (Rs.1280) "as being the more acceptable method in which the Government can express their approbation of his conduct [during both the phases of the unrest]." Beng. Rev. Cons. 61 of 20 Nov. 1832 (62)  
Also see Russell to Braddon, 18 Apl. 1832, Para.20, B.C.1363/54226.
3. Dent to Govt., 87 March 1833, B.C.1502/58890.  
Moreover, Dent noted Col.Fast's "friendly and cordial cooperation, seconded by the zeal and alacrity of officers and men under his command" and Capt. Bird's "judicious arrangements" for "re-establishing order and confidence" in Satrakhani and in apprehending the proscribed sardars. Moreover, the services of Bahadur Dubhasia both in Chota-Nagpur and the Jungle Mahals were praised: Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Paras. 84-86, B.C.1501/58886. This Bahadur was also recommended for an award in 1838 after the Singhbhum campaigns: Wilkinson to Govt., 22 Feb. 1838, Political Despatch Register, G.G.'s Agent (7 Jan. 1837 to 28 Sept. 1839), Letter No.12, Patna Archives.



After these many awards had been nicely adjusted to the merits of the deserving, the Government had to turn its attention to the question of punishment for the guilty. What policy should be pursued towards the rebels had been discussed from the very beginning of the outbreak in Chota-Nagpur. First reactions had been harsh. Cuthbert in January 1832 had written, "with reference to the sanguinary deeds of these freebooters, it appears to me that their trial should be summary"<sup>1</sup>, and, as has been seen, the joint commissioners were given power "to apprehend, try and bring to immediate punishment without further reference to Government all persons whom you may find in open resistance to the civil power."<sup>2</sup> Second thoughts were more cautious and more sympathetic to the insurgents. In a later note to the joint commissioners the Government directed that those who submitted without resistance "although they may previously have taken part in the insurrection, are either to be reserved, or dismissed without security for their future good behaviour or detained as long as may seem expedient at your discretion."<sup>3</sup> Even when it was thought necessary to bring active insurgents to trial it was directed that "capital punishment should be abstained from, unless the particular case of the criminal to be condemned may appear to you to be of such an atrocious

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1. Cuthbert to Govt., 19 Jan. 1832, B.C.1362/54224.

2. Govt. to Cuthbert, 24 Jan. 1832, Para.1, Ibid.

3. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 20 Feb. 1832, Ibid.

character as to render the example indispensable."<sup>1</sup> For serious crime imprisonment with hard labour, banishment or transportation over seas should be the sentence, "subject to the confirmation or revision of the Government."<sup>2</sup> Again in April 1832 the Acting Magistrate of Ramgarh was instructed that "punishment for the offences which have been committed in the heat of the insurrection is only so far desirable as it may conduce to the maintenance of tranquillity hereafter."<sup>3</sup>

This change of attitude was the result of a realization that the outbreaks had not been mere expressions of savagery but of protest against genuine grievances. Blunt had urged an early enquiry into the causes of the outbreak: "the earlier investigation is instituted, the less difficulty is likely to be experienced in ascertaining the truth and of acquiring correct information as to the causes that have produced the disturbance or the parties by whom the insurrection may have been instigated."<sup>4</sup> The enquiries made in Patkum and Palamau by Russell and Neave, and by Sutherland, Cuthbert and the Joint Commissioners in Chota-Nagpur and

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Govt. to Neave, 7 Apl. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1363/54228.

4. Blunt, Minute, 14 Apl. 1832, Para.7, B.C.1363/54227.

Tamar<sup>1</sup> did much to make the position clearer, and to establish the justice as well as common sense of Metcalfe's refusal to follow a harsh or vindictive policy towards the tribal people. "Our duty towards those committed to our care by Almighty Providence," wrote Metcalfe, is happily the same, whatever their feelings may be towards us, we are bound to protect and cherish them, to secure them from oppression and give them good government .... Humanity, duty, policy and common sense unite in prescribing the same course."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the number of prisoners had been growing alarmingly. From Patkum and the neighbouring parganas alone some 650 prisoners had been sent to the Bankura jail by March 1832,<sup>3</sup> and cholera followed upon over-crowding.<sup>4</sup> In April it was decided, therefore, to release those against whom the evidence was weakest. (Russell had earlier released 86, and Braddon 35).<sup>5</sup> The same thing came to pass at Sherghati jail where by March 1832 there were 828 prisoners and prison accommodation for only 600.<sup>6</sup> There the joint commissioners recommended the release of over 250 prisoners who

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1. The reports they submitted were probably not entirely accurate reflections of tribal feeling: after months of fighting not even witnesses were likely to speak fully and openly. And as a radical Calcutta paper put it, "Among the requisites for knowing the true causes of this frightful Cole revolt, were men 'who would walk into the village, sit down under a tree, and talk over the matter with the people.'" Bengal Hurkaru, 30 Apl. 1832, Editorial.
  2. Metcalfe, Minute, 14 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.
  3. Govt. to Braddon, 10 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54226.
  4. Asstt. Civil Surgeon, Bankura, to Russell, 14 Apl. 1832, Ibid.
  5. Braddon to Govt., 7 May 1832, Ibid.  
Also see Govt. to Braddon, 15 May 1832, Ibid.
  6. Neave to Lambert, 8 March 1832, B.C.1363/54229.

belonged to that part of Chota-Nagpur where tranquillity had been restored and there was no danger to public peace.<sup>1</sup>

Trotter provided the released prisoners with eight annas each towards the cost of food for their return home, so that they might not take "recourse to their old habits of pillage."<sup>2</sup>

The release of the prisoners, and the provision of ration money were both approved by a Government which had by now decided "to encourage the insurgents by kindness and persuasion to return to their allegiance."<sup>3</sup>

The joint commissioners meanwhile had committed 179 prisoners, mainly Mundas and Oraons, for trial, nearly all for attacks upon suds. By November some 364 prisoners were on trial in cases involving the killing of some 238 persons.<sup>4</sup> The immediate problem of the authorities was to find the persons to dispose of the huge number of cases. The Burdwan commissioner agreed to deal with cases concerning the Jungle Mahals district, but when the Patna commissioner was asked what time he could devote to the conduct of the trials, Lambert reported none. He pleaded heavy arrears of business, and asked that some other officer be appointed with additional staff.<sup>5</sup>

The Government, taken aback, expressed itself as

1. Jt. Commissioners to Neave, 31 March 1832, Ibid.

2. Trotter to Lambert, 6 Apl. 1832, Ibid.

3. Trotter to Jt. Commissioners, 9 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54228.

4. Trotter to Lambert, 7 June 1832, B.C.1363/54229.

5. Lambert to Govt., 16 June 1832, Ibid.

"at a loss to understand how the supervision of the revenue affairs of the two districts and of the small part of the third" could be sufficient to occupy the whole of his time.<sup>1</sup> None of his explanations were considered to be convincing, and the Government reported his behaviour to the Court of Directors: "we have not been able to regard his explanation on the subject as fully satisfactory."<sup>2</sup>

His place was filled, however, by deputing Master, a Calcutta magistrate, to hold the trials. He found that in most cases the prisoners had made confessions, and that on that basis the law officers<sup>3</sup> had normally pronounced the sentence of capital punishment. To the Nizamat Adalat he emphasized the difficulties in the way of adequate investigation and a fair trial: "The possibility of investigating the cases according to the dates of apprehension or commitment is precluded by the nature of the country from which the parties have been called, the difficulty of issuing their appearance and the extreme distance they have to travel without reference therefore to numerical arrangement, I make it my duty to dispose of the trials as the persons concerned in each arrive from the interior."<sup>4</sup> He also stressed that these cases had been committed for trial during the days of stress

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1. Govt. to Lambert, 26 June 1832, Ibid.
  2. Bengal Govt. to Court of Directors, 25 Sept. 1832, Para.46, B.C.1362/54223.
  3. The Muslim law officers were also known as Maulavis. Mohammedan law continued to be the basis of criminal jurisprudence at this time.
  4. Master to Register, Nizamat Adalat, 22 Oct. 1832, B.C.1502/58893.



and confusion, and so lacked regularity because of the absence of inquests, the imperfect authentication of confessions and other omissions. He therefore expressed the hope that "mercy will not be withheld from an uncivilized race<sup>1</sup> whose offences were committed during the heat of rebellion." Again, finding in one particular case an exceptional number of discrepancies in evidence he wrote an explanatory note, stating that "allowance must be made for the uncivilized condition of the people, for their inability to stand cross-examinations and for the circumstance of their original statements having been required from them 7 and 8 months ago."<sup>2</sup>

Master showed himself understanding in dealing with the tribal people, and often asked for leniency towards such unsophisticated folk. The law officers, however, had found no regard to the peculiarities of the tribal society and had rigorously followed the canons of Muslim law. The Nizamat Adalat acted in similar fashion. "The Court of Nizamut Adawlat judging of each case as it comes before them on its own merits, are bound to administer the full rigor [sic] of the law whilst they must be very imperfectly apprized of many circumstances connected with the state of the people."<sup>3</sup> The Bengal Government had therefore itself to intervene. It

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Case no.58.

3. Govt. to Master, 11 Dec. 1832, B.C.1502/58893.

believed that the crimes "were perpetrated by an ignorant and barbarous people, at a time when they conceived that all civil authority was terminated, and when they saw no restraint opposed to the operation of their most malignant passions."<sup>1</sup> (They may also have taken note of the plea frequently made by the tribesmen that they had only acted upon the orders of their chiefs and leaders.)<sup>2</sup> Fearing that "if the sentence of the law were in every instance carried into effect," the number of executions would be quite shocking, the Government ordered Master to suspend the execution of all capital sentences passed by the Nizamat Adalat. Those so convicted were to be kept in close confinement until he should have consulted the joint commissioners and submitted a report on the commutation of sentences.<sup>3</sup> They even went so far in a letter of 11 December 1832 to suggest that a general amnesty for all offences committed before the re-establishment of the authority of the Government might be given, as had been beneficially done in 1809.<sup>4</sup>

If the Government thus showed itself favourably inclined towards the tribal folk, their own ruler, by origin one of them, most certainly did not. In January 1833 the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur wrote directly to the Governor-

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1. Ibid.

2. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 26 May 1832, B.C.1363/54229.

3. Govt. to Master, 11 Dec. 1832, B.C.1502/58893.  
32 prisoners had been capitally sentenced by the Nizamat Adalat.

4. Ibid.

General to ask that the tribal prisoners be severely punished. "If they are not punished," he wrote, "they will in 3 or 4 years become more insolent and audacious. They will destroy every man of rank who has as yet by some means or other saved his life and property, and carry off whatever he may accumulate in the meantime. They will not leave one out of ten alive, and it will be impossible to prevent them from laying waste this kingdom and other territories besides."<sup>1</sup> In his keenness for retribution he urged that the same harshness as had been displayed at Nawagarh, Bijnaur and Silli should be practised everywhere. There was no evidence in his attitude that he had realised - as the British authorities had done - that neglect of the rights of the tribal people had caused the unrest, and that his failure to protect his people called for a reform in his own attitude.

But before these sentiments could reach the Government, Master had submitted his final report on 17 January 1833. In all he had tried 165 cases connected with the unrest, involving 429 prisoners of whom 164 were convicted by him subject to the approval of the Nizamat Adalat, 59 prisoners were convicted without reference to that court, and 106 prisoners had either died or had been discharged or acquitted. In all 1,063 witnesses had been examined and six trials postponed. The prisoners whose cases had not been

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1. Transl. Petition, Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, Chota-Nagpur to Governor-General, 28 Jan. 1833, B.C.1503/58907.

referred to the Nizamat Adalat had been sentenced to terms of from three to seven years.<sup>1</sup>

While reflecting on these trials, Master repeatedly emphasised the peculiar nature of these ignorant, uncouth and uncivilized tribal folk who "were apparently so wholly unconscious of the fearful and revolting nature of their crimes as to excite mingled sensation of horror and pity."<sup>2</sup> He had been moved to pity to find unhappy men of very advanced age and extreme youth in the calender for capital punishment, and to find that many of the unfortunate prisoners had been driven to commit horrible crimes through "obsequitous attachment to their employers or from servile fear" and he lamented that the real leaders had invariably "contrived to elude justice and to escape with impunity."<sup>3</sup>

Master went on to express his pleasure that in many cases where the Nizamat Adalat had not shown mercy, the Government had commuted the extreme sentences. The one body of prisoners for whom he did not ask for mercy were those from Palamau. These, he thought, had had no legitimate grievances, their crimes had been wanton and unpardonable, and since they were cut off by impenetrable hills and woods from the contagion of Chota-Nagpur, and were of a different stock they could not plead that they had been swept away by

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1. Abstract of Prisoners, B.C.1502/58893.

2. Master to Govt., 17 Jan. 1833, Para.6, B.C.1502/58893.  
Also in Bentinck MS, Box. 15.

3. Ibid. Para.18.

the general tribal uprising. However, in his note to the joint commissioners Master argued that "to enforce the execution of so many capital sentences would be impolitic, and productive of no beneficial consequences."<sup>1</sup>

The joint commissioners agreed with some of Master's arguments, but thought that "notwithstanding the lapse of time since these offences were committed we are decidedly of opinion that a certain number of executions to take place in chains in the Pergunnahs where murders and other atrocities were most numerous will have the best effect in securing the future peace and order of the country."<sup>2</sup> So they recommended that 8 out of 32 prisoners who had received capital sentences from the Nizamut Adalat might be hanged,<sup>3</sup> and that the remaining 24 should be imprisoned for life. The Government agreed with these proposals, and the Ramgarh magistrate was ordered to arrange the executions while those who received life sentences were sent under safe custody to the Magistrate of the 24-Parganas, who would lodge them in Alipur jail.<sup>4</sup>

The Government drew the attention of the joint

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1. Master to Jt. Commissioners, 4 Apl. 1833, B.C.1502/58893.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to Master, 10 Apl. 1833, Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Govt. to Master, 6 May 1833, B.C.1502/58893. The eight prisoners to be hanged were Partowa, Chugnu, Dullu, Hadi, Etua, Gondela, Surwa and Chumra. Also see Govt. to 24-Parganas Magistrate, 6 May 1833, Ibid.



commissioners, however, to their letter of 11 December about the expediency of publishing a general amnesty for offences committed before the re-establishment of the Government's authority in Chota-Nagpur.<sup>1</sup> They thereupon stopped all further prosecutions for crimes still unpunished which had been committed before 25 April 1832. Then in June 1833 they published, on the Government's instructions,<sup>2</sup> a total amnesty throughout Chota-Nagpur. Thus to the relief of the authorities and to the joy of the terrified people the work of punishment was completed in Chota-Nagpur.

In the Jungle Mahals the Government from the start made it clear that only those were to be detained for trial and punishment, who appeared to be "the most influentials the most bold or the most culpable of the party" and that "the suppression of disturbances and the restoration of tranquillity are objects of greater importance than the rigorous punishment of offences or the exact retribution of delinquencies."<sup>3</sup> They also profited from their experience in the first phase, in that they sought to obviate delay in bringing offenders to trial: "many months elapsed before the persons implicated in the last season both in Ramgarh and in the Jungle Mehaults were brought to trial and much of the salutary effect, which might have resulted from the example of their punishment has thus been lost."<sup>4</sup> To prevent such

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1. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 6 May 1833, Para.3, Ibid.

2. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 3 June 1833, Ibid.

3. Govt. to Russell, 20 May 1832, B.C.1501/58887.

4. Govt. to Commissioners, 27 Dec. 1832, Para 1, B.C.1501/58888.

inordinate delay, they asked Dent to undertake the trial of those insurgents (both in the Jungle Mahals and Ramgarh) who were committed by the magistrate. While Dent was vested with the powers of a sessions judge, Wilkinson and Martin were to exercise magisterial powers for commitment. To hasten the process of commitment and trial, the Government wrote, "On the apprehension of any offender Captn. Wilkinson or Mr. Martin will proceed immediately to commit him and Mr. Dent who will be present on the spot, will with the least practical delay hold the trial in the customary form."<sup>1</sup> By Regulation VI of 1832 Government had rendered the presence of a Mohammedan Law officer at a trial unnecessary, so that the complicated method of pronouncing fatwa before passing sentence was no longer required. This marked "the end of the Mahomedan Criminal law as a general law applicable to all persons,"<sup>2</sup> though the Government left it to the discretion of the sessions judge to call in a law officer it required. Moreover, to avoid any delay in cases referred to the Nizamat Adalat, the judge was instructed to refer such cases immediately, while the Nizamat Adalat was asked to deal with such cases at their earliest opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of April Dent, acting on these instructions, had completed the trial of the Jungle Mahals prisoners.

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1. Ibid. Para.3.

2. Rankin, Background to Indian Law, quoted in Stokes, English Utilitarians, 223.

3. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 27 Dec. 1832, Para.3, B.C.1501/53888.

Whereas the cases in Chota-Nagpur, arising from the first phase of the unrest, had required a year for their disposal, those in the Jungle Mahals were all dealt with within a few months. Of the 64 cases dealt with, one was dismissed, in consideration of the services rendered by the prisoner's family, 45 were summarily dealt with, and 18, those of the ringleaders, were referred to the Nizamat Adalat, which imposed sentences of seven years hard labour and thirty-nine strokes of the rattan on 14 of them, and fourteen years hard labour on the other four.<sup>1</sup> Ganga Narain had died in action, Raghu Nath Singh of Dampara was hanged, as were Prap<sup>ta</sup> Singh of Kursul, Balai Pater, Jirpa Naya, Kabi Ram Sardar and Kishan Singh. Four others were imprisoned for life.<sup>2</sup>

In Midnapur Chitreswar Dhal, the Raja of Dhalbhum who had been suspected of complicity in the disturbances in Dampara, and his brother were committed to trial on the charge of murder.<sup>3</sup> They were, however, acquitted by the judge.<sup>4</sup> When the Government received Wilkinson's report of the raja's actions, and a long petition from the raja, the judge was asked for his report on the trial. Dick, the judge, gave his reasons for suspecting the evidence of the Bara Thakur Jugai Kishore and the daroga Nitai Singh who had engineered the prosecution, and recommended the re-instate-

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1. Enclosure, Dent to Govt., 9 Apl. 1833, B.C.1502/58890.
  2. Marginate note, Appendix 5, Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.
  3. Wilkinson to D'oyly, 3 Apl. 1833, B.C.1502/58892.
  4. Dick to Macleod, 26 July 1833, Ibid.

ment of the raja and the curbing of the power of his guardian, the Bara Thakur.<sup>1</sup>

Wilkinson tried to defend the daroga and reiterated his belief that there was sufficient evidence against the raja, quite apart from his confession of guilt, to justify his having been committed for trial. However, since the raja had helped the authorities in capturing Achul and other rebel sardars, and with supplies for the troops, he promised that if the raja were restored, he would try "to make him a good subject of Government."<sup>2</sup>

At long last, on 14 April 1834 the raja was released from all restraint (after his release from jail he had been under house arrest at Midnapur) and allowed to return to the management of his estate, after executing a guarantee of good conduct.<sup>3</sup> With that closure of a rather extraordinary proceeding the punishment of the insurgents responsible for

1. Ibid.

2. Wilkinson to Govt., 12 Aug. 1833, Para.10, BC. 1502/58892. Wilkinson perhaps yielded because of the strong protest of the judge who had written to the Government, "Had I had the power, I should most certainly have directed the Magistrate to release the Rajah forthwith .....The petitioner [the raja] ... was apprehended at his own Gurh, or Residence, deprived of his estates, forwarded under a guard to Midnapore, lodged in a common jail, charged with the most heinous of crimes, tried for his life, fully acquitted, and yet bound over not to return to his home, but to answer to indefinite charges brought forward by no ostensible prosecutor!. Thus has this young man been kept for upwards of 3 months, afar from his home, while his extensive estates have been delivered over to the possession & the mercy of those persons, whom he declared to be the instigators of those charges, which aimed not at his degradation only, but at his very life." Dick to Govt., 26 July 1833, B.C.1502/58892.

3. Wilkinson to P.Nicolson, Principal Assistant to the G.G.'s Agent, 14 March 1834. Ibid.

the second phase of the insurrection can be considered completed.

A number of minor political and administrative measures required immediate attention, before any general plan of reforms could be instituted. To these some brief reference must now be made.

Cuthbert, when he made his report on Tamar in 1832, had drawn attention to the problem of the succession to the Tamar gaddi, which had fallen vacant in September 1831. The Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur claimed that since the raja had died childless, the estate should revert to him. The tribal people and their mundas and mankis, who had declared that they would not pay their revenue either to the Tamar raja or to the Chota-Nagpur raja, but only to a Government official, resisted the maharaja's claim. They wished to see Pradham Maninath Sahi, a relation of the raja, installed as their new ruler. (They also prayed that up to fifteen hundred rupees should be set aside for the support of the two ranis, widows of the late raja.)<sup>1</sup> There were two other claimants also in the field, Raghubar Sahi, another relation of the late raja, and Thakur Chetan Singh of Kharsawan, who for a long time had been laying claim to suzerainty over the turbulent Kols of Kochang, Tamar Chitpek, Sonapet and Maram-janga.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cuthbert to Govt., 24 Apl. 1832. B.C.1362/54225.

2. Memorandum, Wilkinson, 1 March 1833, B.C.1502/58889.



These conflicting claims were not, however, settled until Wilkinson, in his capacity as Political Agent to the Governor-General, came to Tamar in April 1833. The claim of Thakur Chetan Singh, he recommended, should be allowed, since he alone was capable of controlling the area.<sup>1</sup> He then turned to the main question, to discuss which he had assembled the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur, the late raja's relatives, already referred to, and the chiefs of the five parganas of Tamar, Silli, Baranda, Rahi and Bundu. Two other claimants also appeared, Kanhai Sahi, the raja of Rahi, and Gopal Singh, the son of the Jaipur raja by the late Tamar raja's daughter. After a thorough investigation, Wilkinson selected Maninath Sahi to succeed to the gaddi, a choice which gave general satisfaction,<sup>2</sup> and to which the mundas and mankis gladly signified their agreement in an ikrarnama.<sup>3</sup> Raghubar Sahi, who had proclaimed himself raja without waiting for the commissioner's decision was put under restraint.<sup>4</sup> In June 1833 the settlement was confirmed by the Bengal Government with much satisfaction.

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1. Memorandum, Wilkinson, 4 March 1833, Ibid.

2. Wilkinson to Govt., 20 May 1833, B.C.1502/58893: Interesting facts came to light in the course of this investigation. Genealogical tables were produced and legitimacy challenged. Raghubar Sahi, for example, stated that "there were scarcely any Rajahs in either Cuttack, Sumbulpore, or other jungly districts whose ancestors were not some of them illegitimate and on that account as his grandfather was the brother of the late Govind Sahi, he hoped his claim might be preferred."

3. Transl. Agreement of the Tamar mundas and mankis. 30 Apl. 1833, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 20 May 1833, Ibid.

4. Govt., to Wilkinson, 3 June 1833, Ibid.

This was, however, only part of the settlement required in the south-west of the Jungle Mahals. It was necessary to strengthen the hand of the Thakur of Kharsawan - if only to erect an effective barrier between Patkum and Barabhum in the Jungle Mahals, and the Larka Kols of Singhbhum. (The Kols had, of course, been "encouraged by the right of succession to the zamindary of Tamar being contested by three claimants"<sup>1</sup> and as Wilkinson showed in a memorandum of 1 March 1833, all the chiefs in the area were using the Kols to feed fat their ancient grudges.) It was necessary to appease the mutual jealousies of the zamindar of Bamanghati, and his overlord the Mayurbhanj raja. The Mahapater had as ally the kunwar of Saraikela, who was in dispute with Mayurbhanj raja over Kochang pargana, while the Mayurbhanj raja had won over two of the Kol districts under the Mahapater promising them rent-free lands. It was necessary, or so Wilkinson thought, to inflict some signal reverse upon the Larka Kols such as should break them of their lawless habits.<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of Wilkinson's information the Government passed a series of resolutions. They laid down that the chief of Bamanghati should be left undisturbed in his subordinate position vis-a-vis the Raja of Mayurbhanj paying Rs.500 a year for Nij Bamanghati, and as much again for

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 15 Feb. 1833, Para.7. B.C. B.C.1502/58889.
  2. Memorandum, Wilkinson, 1 March 1833, Ibid.

Khas Des and Kharda Des, etc. To prevent future conflict, the raja was to be restrained from any interference in Bamanghati.<sup>1</sup> (The two Kol tracts which the Mayurbhanj raja had been seducing from allegiance to the Bamanghati chief were to be restored to him: the raja could not control them, and left to themselves the Kols would take to plunder.) Ricketts, the Cuttack commissioner, and Capt. Wilkinson were to meet the parties to the dispute and produce a final report.

Towards the close of March Ricketts and Wilkinson met the Bamanghati and Mayurbhanj chiefs on the neutral ground at Narsing-garh and adjusted the disputes. A list of all the villages belonging to Bamanghati was drawn, and agreed to by an ikrarnama signed by both the chiefs and the assembled Kol sardars. The four Kol districts were all placed under the Bamanghati chief, but he agreed to pay Rs.101 a year to his overlord, the Raja of Mayurbhanj for them.<sup>2</sup>

Finally Wilkinson entered Singhbhum with troops.<sup>3</sup> There he met the Raja of Porahat, Thakur Chetan Singh and several leading Kol chiefs. Several notorious freebooters

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1. Resolution, Govt., 4 March 1833, Ibid.
  2. Wilkinson & Ricketts to Govt., 1<sup>st</sup> Apl. 1833, Paras 29-32, Beng Cr.Judl. Cons. 1 of 6 Apl. 1833 (140)  
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  3. Wilkinson to Govt., 2 Apl. 1833, B.C.1502/58890. Also see 'An Officer of the 24th N.I', Saraikela, 11 Apl. 1833, Bengal Hurkaru, 18 Apl. 1833.

were there handed over to Wilkinson,<sup>1</sup> and the Kols, heeding Wilkinson's dire warnings "entered into solemn engagements to exert their utmost endeavours to prevent plundering in future and to control the immediate restoration of such cattle and other property, as had during the present year been carried off by the Coles of their villages, from Dulbhoom, Kursawa, Bamunghatty etc."<sup>2</sup> The Larka Kols did hand over most of the plundered cattle and property. A variety of other minor disputes over boundaries and suzerainties were also settled at the same time, so that when Wilkinson withdrew he was in hopes that Singhbhum had been settled.

The hope was vain, for by June and July 1833 Larka Kol depredations had begun again. As Dent said, reporting these outbreaks, "the wretched state of anarchy existing in Singhbhum where each holder of a fifty or 100 villages, exercises sovereign powers within their limits, gives but too much reason to apprehend that the people of Kochang and Jumoor Chitpul will receive aid from thence, not only in resisting the proposed attack, but probably also in renewing their forays in Chota Nagpore."<sup>3</sup> In fact an effective settlement of the area had to wait until military operations

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1. Wilkinson to Govt., 12 June 1833, Ibid. The Raja of Porahat and his servants were rewarded for their help in apprehending Bindrai, Sui and other freebooters.
  2. Wilkinson to Govt., 27 Apr. 1833, Para. 3, B.C.1502/58890.
  3. Dent to Govt., 28 July 1833, B.C.1502/58890.

against the Larka Kols in November 1836 and their incorporation in the South-West Frontier Agency in 1837.<sup>1</sup> The various stages in the settlement of the Dhalbhum estate have already been referred to earlier; they formed the only serious political problem requiring attention in the main areas affected by the second phase of the insurrection.

It has already been seen that as the depth of the insurgents' sense of grievance became apparent, and with the penetration of European military and civil officers, in far greater numbers than usual, into the tribal areas, measures were taken first to record and then to remove evils. Thus we find the joint commissioners, in March 1832, ordering the officers commanding detachments to enquire into complaints of oppression of the tribesmen by their landlords, and bring offenders to book.<sup>2</sup> Blunt went so far as to suggest that "to secure the future peace of the disturbed pergunnahs the first measure necessary appears to me to be the restoration of the Mankees and Moondas to their hereditary possessions."<sup>3</sup> As has been seen, in Sonepur just such a restoration was effected in May, the mundas and mankis being re-instated as soon as the leases of the thikadars or

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1. Rickett's, Selections from Records, No. XVI, 61.
  2. Jt. Commissioners to officers commanding Tikoo and Churia, 2 March 1832, B.C.1362/54224. The amins appointed in May 1832 were instructed to find out how much had been collected on account of zamindari dak, and what bribes the nazir and thana officers had taken: Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 31 May 1832, Para. 7, B.C.1363/54228.
  3. Blunt, Minute, 27 Apl. 1832, B.C.1363/54227.



revenue-farmers expired.<sup>1</sup>

Another grievance came to an end in May 1832 when the joint commissioners suspended the tax upon home-brewed beer. They were also asked to consider whether the abkari tax should be abolished altogether.<sup>2</sup> In January 1833 Dent proposed a quite radical solution: that a fresh tax on land should be substituted for the abkari and dak collections, which had amounted to about 15,000 and 4,000 rupees respectively. Such a tax would eradicate the possibility of a whole series of illegal exactions. The domestic manufacture of hanria by the tribal people was to be freely allowed.<sup>3</sup>

The joint commissioners also recommended the ending of poppy cultivation in Chota-Nagpur and Palamau, even though "by the abolition of the Hundea tax and the destruction of the poppy cultivated by the Koirees, we can hope for little revenue under the heads of opium or sayer."<sup>4</sup> The Government ordered that the cultivation of the poppy was to be discontinued and the abkari collections and the dak cess were to be suspended.<sup>5</sup>

In the Jungle Mahals similar steps were taken. Wilkinson reported on the abuses in the salt and excise system to the Salt Agent and Collector of Midnapur, with a vigorous request "to apply a speedy and efficacious remedy,

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 30 May 1832, B.C.1363/54229.
  2. Govt., to Jt. Commissioners, 22 May 1832, Para.3, Ibid.
  3. Dent. Separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58891.
  4. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 19 June 1832, B.C.1363/54228.
  5. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 3 June 1833, B.C.1502/58891.

as it is quite out of the question that the ryots should patiently submit to such gross and weighty oppressions.<sup>1</sup> To the north, Dent in Barabhum tackled the abuses in the abkari system by demanding that a Muslim speculator who had oppressed the villages and sundis (liquor vendors) should have his lease terminated.<sup>2</sup>

Dent's last major recommendation was that the practice of slavery - usually for indebtedness - should be prohibited, and that all in a state of bondage should be declared free within two years from the time of the proclamation.<sup>3</sup> He also urged that the abolition of slavery should be extended to Bihar, from which it had been introduced into Chota-Nagpur.)

Such were the measures taken piecemeal, on an ad hoc basis, to cure the immediate evils of the situation in the tribal areas. They served to restart the economic life of the region, to ensure order and a return to confidence, to reward the faithful and to punish those few whose crimes could not be overlooked even by the sympathetic and under-

1. Wilkinson to D'oyly, 2 May 1833, B.C.1502/58890.

2. Dent to Govt., 9 Apl. 1833, Para.5, Ibid.

Dent had also urged the abolition of salt darogaship at Armai in Chota-Nagpur, and that "a cheap supply of salt should be made available to the tribal people. I cannot understand why the unfortunate Coles of Nagpoor should be saddled with an Establishment to prevent their purchasing salt as cheap as their neighbours of Singbhoom and Sumbhulpore."

Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, B.C.1502/58891.

3. Ibid.

standing, and to eradicate or at least suspend some of the evils which had prompted rebellion. There remained the larger task of recasting the whole administration so as to consolidate these gains. All the useful suggestions were discussed when proposals for a new administrative system for the whole of Chota-Nagpur, Palamau, the Jungle Mahals and Dhalbhum were under consideration later in 1833.

## CHAPTER IX

### Aftermath -II. The Reorganisation of the Administration of the Tribal Areas.

Early in 1832 Major Sutherland, the private secretary to Metcalfe, had expressed his opinion that with the suppression of the first phase of tribal unrest "a fit occasion" had arisen for devising new administrative arrangements for Chota-Nagpur.<sup>1</sup> The insurgents had been impressed "by the exhibition which we have been called upon to make of our military power", and would accept a new more judicious administration if one could be devised.<sup>2</sup>

At least one suggestion as to how improvements might be effected had the merit of simplicity: a correspondent of the Bengal Hurkaru suggested that the best way "to reclaim these people from their present barbarous state" was to drive a good road through the district and so bring them into touch with the civilized world. (He did add as an afterthought, "Education ought not of course to be neglected."<sup>3</sup>) The Government, however, preferred a thorough investigation of the peculiar problems of the area. Local investigations were carried on by several officers, both individually and

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1. Sutherland to Govt., n.d., B.C.1363/54227.

2. Ibid.

3. A correspondent, Camp Chuk Bhawani, 14 Feb. 1832, Bengal Hurkaru, 24 Feb. 1832. Nothing was done with regard to their education, though an effort was made to recruit them into the local battalion: Wilkinson to Govt., 1 Sept. 1832, Bentinck MS. Box 23. Also see Wilkinson to Benson, 1 Sept. and 29 Sept. 1832, Ibid.

collectively, and on the basis of their reports Metcalfe and Blunt recorded their views in several minutes.

It was on 16 November 1832 that the joint commissioners submitted their report on the Chota-Nagpur unrest, and, "with great diffidence" their suggestions for the future management of Chota-Nagpur.

They dealt first with future police arrangements for the area. For Chota-Nagpur they suggested that the maharaja "should be entrusted exclusively with the charge of the police of his country and should possess the power and authority to discharge and entertain his own Umlahs of every grade."<sup>1</sup> He in turn would invest his subordinate chiefs of Tamar, Baranda, Bundu, Rahi and Silli with police powers within their estates.<sup>2</sup> They in turn would leave the management of the police to their subordinate jagirdars within their respective jagirs. Each chief would thus be directly responsible for those lands which he held as Khalsa, i.e. unfarmed, under his direct management.

For Sonapur a similar arrangement was recommended, with the kunwar being subordinated in his police duties to the maharaja, and his rautias, mankis and other minor chiefs, subordinate to him, but all in direct control of their khalsa villages.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in Chota-Nagpur the maharaja

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1. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.98, B.C.1502/58891.

2. Ibid. Para.99.

3. Ibid. Para. 105.



might establish thanas at important points, with a thanadar in control of the division.

Should disturbances break out, despite this elaborate arrangement of indigenous police, the jagirdars of the dam and kam (cash and service) villages would provide men for the suppression of the disorders. Should they fail repeatedly in their duty, then their jagirs might, with the approval of the European authority, be transferred to another member of their family.<sup>1</sup>

Within the village there was to be an equally clear administrative system. Each holder of a village would receive directions from above. He in turn would nominate his assistant, a gorait or kotwal whom he would remunerate either with land or a fixed annual payment in grain. To that payment in grain every ryot was to contribute according to the number of his ploughs.<sup>2</sup> (The exact share of each ryot would be settled by the ilaqadar, circle headman, or the zamindar of the estate.)

When any culprit was seized he was first to be taken by the village headman to the ilaqadar, who would send him on to the head of the estate. If his crime was a minor one he would be kept in confinement, if a major one he would be forwarded to the European authorities. The ilaqadar would report each case either in writing or through a trustworthy

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1. Ibid. Para.110.

2. Ibid. Para.101.

messenger. In areas where the thanadari system operated the village gorait would forward culprits to the thanadar whose functions would be similar to those of the ilagadar.<sup>1</sup>

There would thus be a hierarchy of officials, with the maharaja exercising a general control over all, and every landholder responsible for protecting his own dependants. The whole would be financed from the sums realized from unclaimed property found in the jurisdictions and from the fines imposed upon offenders dealt with in them. Were these inadequate then permission might be granted to make a levy of from eight annas to three rupees upon each village.<sup>2</sup>

The joint commissioners were very particular about the protection of the rights of the ryots and of the tribal chieftains. Since the mankis and the mundas had been put back in possession of their estates, they thought that neither the maharaja nor the kunwar should have the power of depriving any of these chiefs of their lands. They therefore requested the Government to declare null and void any transfer of land in repayment of advances of money. In case of recurrent misconduct, lands of such chiefs might be transferred to the nearest of their kin popular among the ryots. "Such a rule", they wrote, "would prevent the assignment of villages to men of capital in lieu of cash advances, and the non-confiscation of the lands of zemindars except in

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1. Ibid. Para.105.

2. Ibid. Para.109.

favour of individuals of their own family, would ...  
 obviate the apprehension of the recurrence of disturbances."<sup>1</sup>

Another important recommendation was with regard to the use of panchayats to settle boundary disputes among landholders, which disputes often led to local affrays of a serious nature. In case of a dispute between the maharaja or a raja on the one hand and an ilagadar on the other, three to five ilagadars of the area should decide the issue and their award should be final. In case of dispute between two villages within a petty estate the ilagadar of that estate was to select the heads of the adjoining villages of most importance."<sup>2</sup>

In civil cases involving money transactions they suggested that the maharaja and rajas might be vested with judicial power. But where they were themselves parties, a panchayat might be useful. In ordinary cases the parties were to choose between judgment by panchayat or by the raja and a written undertaking to abide by their decision was to be taken from the disputants beforehand. A panchayat's decision was to be final, but an appeal could be allowed to the European authority from the decision of a raja.<sup>3</sup>

Investigations in cases involving landed property, such as the right of succession to estates, would be made by

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1. Ibid. Para.112.
  2. Ibid. Para.113.
  3. Ibid. Para.114.

the European authority who was to refer the matter to the Government in doubtful cases or where the public peace was involved. But cases of minor importance might be referred back to the raja or to a panchayat.<sup>1</sup>

These recommendations for a new police and judicial system could be expected to bring justice to every man's door, and so the expense and inconvenience of the old system, with its distant, unfamiliar courts, would be done away with. They thus embodied Bentham's idea of "a summary, non-technical method in which the suitor would orally state his plea and personally confront the defendant."<sup>2</sup> But the creation of such a hierarchy of authority also presupposed the concentration of undivided power in the hands of the European officer in charge of the area. Indeed, the joint commissioners themselves clearly saw this, and they asked that the officer in charge of Chota-Nagpur should be granted special powers, and that other officers with similar powers should be appointed to supervise a similar system in the disturbed areas of the Jungle Mahals and Midnapur districts and in Palamau.<sup>3</sup> Here was the genesis of the Non-Regulation system which was to be applied to the South-West Frontier Agency, and of the special position of the Political Agent who was, with his assistants, to administer it.

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1. Ibid. Para. 115.

2. Stokes, Utilitarians, 71.

3. Jt. Commissioners to Govt., 16 Nov. 1832, Para.116, B.C.1502/58891.

This joint report was not the only report or body of suggestions made to the Bengal Government. Dent, one of the joint commissioners, submitted a note dissenting from some of the proposals outlined above.<sup>1</sup> His comments were not directed against the system proposed, as against the personnel who, it was intended, should manage it. Thus he argued that past experience showed the maharaja to be incapable of wielding police powers; he should not be entrusted with extensive powers again. If there were to be thanadars and thanas it must be specified that the officers should be selected from amongst the principal inhabitants of the thana, and that the subordinate staff should be residents of the division. The post of amin, for which he thought thakur a more acceptable title, should be filled by the maharaja, but with European authority retaining the power to confirm or remove his choice.

Dent also wished to stiffen the system somewhat. He pointed out the great distance of the sadr station from Chota-Nagpur, and showed from Rennell's figures that the Ramgarh district formed more than two fifths of the whole area of Bihar. A non-Regulation system, he agreed, was the best system for Chota-Nagpur, "from its great extent, the peculiar nature of the country and state of the population."<sup>2</sup> But it was necessary that the controlling European authority

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1. Dent, separate remarks, 5 Jan. 1833, Ibid.

2. Ibid.



should reside within Chota-Nagpur and that authority should be supported by a body of troops also stationed within the tribal territory.

His suggestions about a land tax to replace the excise and postal levies have already been noted, as also his wish to cut the burden on salt. His other major point, of an economic nature, was a plea for a reduction in rents, coupled with security of tribal rights in land. He suggested that it was necessary "to fix the rent of the Moondas and Mankees occupying the hilly tract [of Tamar] on a very low scale which will make the payment easy and tend to prevent future disputes."<sup>1</sup> Once such men had a real interest in the soil, the fear of losing these rights would prevent them resorting to violence and unrest again. For the same reason he proposed that a curb should be set upon the maharaja's power to alienate the lands held by jagirdars, and that the lands of the raja and of the hereditary jagirdars, mankis and mundas should not be liable for their private debts, so that those who lent them money should do so at their own risk. These rules, Dent realized, would deprive the capitalist of the security of landed property and would tend to check cultivation and retard improvement but they were, in his view, necessary for the preservation of the public tranquillity. He forwarded a copy of the rules which had been

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1. Ibid.

proposed by the Ramgarh. collector on 17 March 1814, and which, with one exception - rule three - embodied most of his suggestions.

Another set of proposals, informed by a very different spirit, came from the Maharaja of Chota-Nagpur. His first request was that the police administration of the whole area, including all the jagirs and subordinate estates, should be entrusted to him. He wished to have the power to appoint all the amlas, whose faults he would be responsible for. He should also be responsible for entertaining investigating and discharging all cases.<sup>1</sup>

The jagirdars, he suggested, should be required to give muchalakas or securities "that they will not conceal any Muqhdumas [cases], but promptly make them known, and that they will make no excessive demands, or oppress their inferior jageerdars or ryots, but remain in attentive obedience,"<sup>2</sup> and if they failed in their duty their property should be attached. (In Sonapur the rautias too should be compelled to give such securities, as they had been responsible for instigating insurrection and for sharing in the plunder.)

To prevent any future tribal risings, the jagirdars should be required to entertain stout, well-armed barkandazes ready at their ghats. Bodies of regular troops should also be posted at important points, and the mundas, mahtos, mankis

1. Transl. Petition, Maharaja Jagarnnath Sahi, 6 Apl. 1832, B.C.1502/58891.

2. Ibid.

and pahans should be made to maintain the roads in their areas in such repair that the troops could easily be moved from place to place.<sup>1</sup>

To defray the expenses of the police the jagirdars should pay according to their capacity, and although he proposed to reduce the number of village goraits or watchmen, each village should be asked to contribute in grain towards the salaries of the subordinate police.

His other recommendations were that the smaller villages should be exempt from the dak charges and that the poppy cultivation should be abolished.

In a later petition he again pressed for the maintenance of regular troops in Chota-Nagpur to hold down the tribal people, perhaps with a cantonment in the Sonepur pargana. Then "the rebelliously disposed would never attempt to carry their marauding schemes into execution."<sup>2</sup> He pointed particularly to the experience of the four months of the rainy season of 1832 when, in the absence of regular troops, the barkandazes had entirely failed to prevent the sacking of some 20 villages by the Larka Kols of Singhbhum.

Yet another set of suggestions came from Master, the Patna commissioner, who had tried the cases connected with the unrest, He stressed the need for a more central sadr station, "providing ready access for the injured and more

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1. Ibid.

2. Petition, Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, 28 Jan. 1833, B.C. B.C.1503/58907.

speedy redress of their grievances. It would ensure during favorable [sic] seasons a more familiar intercourse with these wild tribes who would gradually be led to appreciate such extended kindness and conciliation and much would thus be gained by moral influence which physical power could never effect."<sup>1</sup> He therefore suggested that a joint magistrate and deputy collector should be stationed at Sherghati to look after "the internal management of the restless province of Palamow, with a controul [sic] over certain other Thannas."<sup>2</sup> The former custom of holding courts for some months in each year at Chatra, which was much nearer to Chota-Nagpur, might be revived. A magistrate from this place (its climate was favourable to Europeans for some months) would be "alive to the wants or grievances of a singular race of people who, tho' nominally governed, receive little protection from laws which cannot be efficiently administered."<sup>3</sup> Master was quite conscious that these arrangements would entail extra expenses, but "when the peace of so extensive a district is concerned & the repose of so many thousands of inhabitants is at stake the trifling expense to be incurred by this arrangement," he thought, "would surely be a point of minor consideration to a liberal and enlightened Government."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Master to Govt., 17 Jan. 1833, Para.27, B.C.1502/58893.  
Also see Bentinck MS., Box. 15.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.* Para.31.

4. *Ibid.* Para.28.

In the suggestions of the joint commissioners, of Dent individually, and of Master there can be seen applied to the problem of the tribal areas some of the ideas which had been worked out by Munro and Elphinstone or of Metcalfe, even of Bentham. Outside Bengal the reaction against the Permanent Settlement and the Regulations of Cornwallis had grown vigorous. Now that attack was pushed within the Presidency. It is not possible to show whether Master or Dent had been in direct contact with Munro, Elphinstone or the other recognised leaders of the anti-Cornwallis school, though Dent, while serving at Allahabad might have become familiar with Metcalfe's system in the Delhi Territories<sup>1</sup> or with the new arrangements in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces. Their movements - and those of Blunt who had only recently framed rules for Arakan - towards a Non-Regulation system may have been made on the basis of their direct experience, for Dent and Blunt had both considerable spells of duty in the tribal areas.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Wilkinson, however, the link of ideas is clearer. He had served at Nagpur for more than a decade,<sup>3</sup> and he drew directly on his experiences, and upon the ideas worked out by Munro and Elphinstone. Thus

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1. Dent was at Allahabad in 1817 (Register of E.I.Co.'s servants, 91), while Metcalfe system was at its height in 1815-1818 (Spear, Twilight of the Mughals, 88)
  2. Register of E.I.Co.'s servants, 91-92 and 35-36.
  3. Hodgson, officers of the Bengal Army, IV, 472-473. He had fought in the third Maratha War (1817-18) and had served with the Nagpur Auxiliary Horse from 1819 to 1830.



in a letter to Ross Mangles written in 1837 he wrote, "In the Deckan where the offices of collector and magistrate were held by the same person, the collector's influence as such contributed much to promote the efficient performance of the magistrate's duties, because the villages in his Division were generally the Khalsa of Govt., of which he had to make the settlements; he was thus brought in frequent contact with the people and became well acquainted with them ...", and he went on, "the Patel of a village was not only its Farmer, but at the head of the village police, and a neglect of his police duties, as well as a breach of his farming engagements, rendered him liable to be turned out of his farm. Here [in Chota - Nagpur] neither a Theekadar nor Ryot of a village have [sic] ever occasion to approach the collector as such, and the former is only liable to forfeit his farm when he fails in fulfilling his engagements to the zemindar."<sup>1</sup> Here are laid out what he would have wished to see in the South-West Frontier Agency: a clear line of undivided authority and responsibility, and direct contact between European official and the people of his district, down to the village level. His appeal for experienced officers who should be accessible to the people at all hours and thus shield them from the exploitation by the petty officials, is in the best Punjab manner.

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1. Wilkinson to Govt., 1 Oct. 1837, Para.5, Political Despatch Register, G.G.'s Agent (7 Jan. 1837 to 28 Sept. 1833), Letter No.48, Patna Archives.

Such ideas were also likely at this time to be well received by those in power in India, for under the reforming Bentinck were ranged such men as Charles Metcalfe, Vice-President of the Council, Blunt, the third member of Council and James Thomason, later famous for his work in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, as Deputy Secretary of the Judicial Department. Of these Blunt, the least known, was certainly not the least important in pushing the views of the joint commissioners. He was a paternalist who attacked the Permanent Settlement vigorously: "How many ancient and highly respectable families" were reduced to want by the frauds and chicanery of our native officers and by the operation of our Revenue laws in bringing their Estate to sale."<sup>1</sup> His experiences in Ramgarh, the Jungle Mahals, the Cuttack Tributary Mahals and as the special commissioner for Arakan were particularly valuable aids to the reformers, and, as will be seen, the rules which he had drawn up for Arakan were put to use in formulating a scheme for Chota-Nagpur and the Jungle Mahals.

The early burst of plans and proposals, designed to deal with the situation revealed and created by the unrest in Chota-Nagpur came for a while to a halt when violence spread into the Jungle Mahals and the joint commissioners

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1. Beng. Secret Cons. 8 of 6 Aug. 1832, ( $\frac{367}{3}$ )

had again to turn their attention to military campaigns. But by the middle of 1833 the Government was able to take up again the consideration of the earlier proposals.

The first point considered was the suggestion made on 16 November 1832 by the joint commissioners that the parganas of Palamau, Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies, and the adjacent areas of the Jungle Mahals and Midnapur districts might be put under a separate administration, excluded from the operations of the general Regulations. On 3 June 1833 the Government, adopting the general plan, asked the joint commissioners to submit a detailed plan for a non-regulation area under the Political Agent for the South-West Frontier as commissioner aided by one or more assistants.<sup>1</sup> They were further asked to consult the commissioners of the Patna, Burdwan and Cuttack divisions and the magistrates at Sherghati, Bankura and Midnapur and others on the following points: the extent and limits of the new jurisdiction, the most suitable place for the station of the commissioner and his assistants, as also the means of supervising and controlling their actions.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the commissioners of Patna and Monghyr divisions were asked to give their opinion regarding the disposal of those areas of the Ramgarh district not included in the new jurisdiction

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1. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 3 June 1833, B.C.1501/58891.

2. Ibid. Para.3.

when the post of the Judge-Magistrate and Collector of Ramgarh was abolished.<sup>1</sup>

The joint commissioners were asked not to take the problems of Chota-Nagpur, Palamau, Dhalbhum or Barabhum separately, but "on a consideration of the wants and peculiarities of the whole range of country to be brought under the contemplated arrangement and with advertence to all the matters on which suggestions have been offered and which remains for determination, to embody in a distinct draft of rules, which you will make as simple and concise as possible, the provisions general or local which you would recommend to be prescribed by the Government for the conduct of the judicial, Revenue or police affairs of the Commissioner's jurisdiction."<sup>2</sup> In case of difference of opinion, each joint commissioner was to report separately.

The Government further made it clear that the Assistants to the Commissioner were ordinarily to exercise the authority vested by the regulations in the officers in charge of districts. The final say in any matter would lie with the commissioner, except in criminal trials where he would be subject to the Nizamat Adalat. In any revenue or civil matter affecting the general peace of the area, he was to report to the Government. The joint commissioners were

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1. Govt. to Commissioners of Patna, Burdwan, Cuttack and Monghyr divisions, 3 June 1833, B.C.1502/58891.
  2. Govt. to Jt. Commissioners, 3 June 1833, Para.6, B.C.1501/58891.

most particularly warned that the new establishment should be on the most economical lines, especially as the charge of the police would be transferred to the rajas.<sup>1</sup>

Finally the Government called upon Wilkinson individually to comment upon the points of dissent with the joint commissioners proposals which Dent had submitted in January 1833. (It will be remembered that these had dealt with such points as the substitution of a land tax for the abkari and dak collections, abolition of rural slavery and restrictions on alienation of lands by the chiefs.)

This resolution of the Government set in motion a big territorial readjustment, in the course of which many vested interests had to be reconciled. The process was therefore quite a protracted one, especially as Wilkinson, a key figure, was for some months detained in Sambhalpur.<sup>2</sup>

The first to reply was D'Oyly, the Midnapur magistrate. He thought that only Dhalbhum, the largest pargana of his district, extending all along the western frontier, should be incorporated in the new jurisdiction. He admitted that there were thirteen other jungle estates in Midnapur, but argued that 11 of these, lying to the east of Dhalbhum, were nearer to the sadr station and readily accessible for

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1. Ibid. Para.8.

2. Dent to Govt., 25 June 1833, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 34 of 22 July 1833, (140) . Meanwhile, Dent asked for rules in force in Arakan, Assam, Nerbada, Sagar and Delhi territories (Ibid.) The Government, however, sent the rules for Arakan only because they were "more detailed and specific than any other." Govt. to Dent, 22 July 1833, Beng. Cr. Judl. Cons. 34 of 22 July 1833 (140)  
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revenue collection.<sup>1</sup> He ignored the fact that in earlier years several of these, e.g. Bhanjbhum, Ramgarh, Bishnupur and Bogree had been seats of great tribal unrest.

Dick, the Judge of Midnapur, put forward an even more extreme opinion. He did not consider it expedient to place any portion of Midnapur under the new jurisdiction, arguing that Hazaribagh, the probable chief station of the new administration, was no nearer than Midnapur to Dhalbhum. Moreover, he thought the extension of the late unrest to Dhalbhum had been the result of a family feud and was not therefore ground for so radical a change. He strongly opposed the idea of deregulationizing any part of this district, because the people of jungly parganas were becoming more and more acquainted with the laws and administration: "It would be hard," he wrote, "to throw them back into a more rude state of social existence for surely it will be granted that that state which is under no published law is less civilized than one under a Regular Established civil and criminal Code."<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to contrast Dick's ideas with the report from Alexander, the joint magistrate who a few months back had stated that he had no instance of a tribal inhabitant from Dhalbhum visiting the court at Midnapur.<sup>3</sup>

Next, Russell, the Magistrate of the Jungle Mahals,

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1. D'oyly to Jt. Commissioners, 24 July 1833, B.C.1501/58891.
  2. Dick to Dent, 26 July 1833, B.C.1502/58891.
  3. Alexander to Hunter, 28 Feb. 1833, Para.4, B.C.1502/58890.

submitted his comments. He thought that Keilapal, Patkum and Barabhum, with their mainly Bhumij population, were the most turbulent areas. Keilapal he was specially anxious to see included in the new jurisdiction. With these three parganas gone, he thought, the remaining portion of the Jungle Mahals might be left under the regulations.<sup>1</sup>

Nisbet, the Judge of the Jungle Mahals, though admitting that he had very little experience about the people and affairs of this district, again showed a judicial lack of enthusiasm for deregulationization: "... though no doubt the local experience and personal activity of the officer who now holds the place of Political Agent in the S.W. frontier give the best assurance that the transfer will be attended with immediate benefit, yet in the event of his relinquishing the situation it appears very doubtful whether the charge would be managed with equal effect by his successor, and the probability is that it would be found necessary to put matters upon their old footing."<sup>2</sup> He thought that the people would prefer a permanent and invariable system to a transitional or uncertain state of administration.

On the Ramgarh district, Dent, in the capacity of the judge of that district, reported that Palamau, Ramgarh including Raindihi, Kodarma, Kharakdiha, Chakai and Kunda might advantageously be included in the new jurisdiction,

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1. Russell to Dent, 10 Aug. 1833, B.C.1502/48891.

2. Nisbet to Jt. Commissioners, 12 Aug, 1833, Ibid.

whereas Sherghati, Siris-Kutumba, Charkawa, Japla, Surjun and Belonja might be left under the regulations.<sup>1</sup> He left Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies untouched because there could be no two opinions about the need to include them in the new jurisdiction.

Trotter, the Acting Magistrate of Ramgarh, differed on certain points with Dent. The first consideration of the Government, he thought, was "to provide for the tranquillity of the country and to secure the rights of the inhabitants for whose protection the introduction of a new system is accounted necessary."<sup>2</sup> In this light he did not think it proper that such a large territory as Dent had proposed, should be excluded from the operation of the regulations. The northern parts of Ramgarh pargana, fertile, civilized, close enough to Sherghati, ought to remain under the regulation system. The Raja of Ramgarh might press for the whole of his zamindari to be included within the jurisdiction by pleading the inconvenience and expense of having to institute cases in different courts. But on the basis of the Benthamite principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the question resolves itself into this," he said, "whether the convenience of an individual or the benefit of a large body of people is more deserving of the consideration of Government". Since the revenue of the whole zamindari was fixed there would be no administrative problem for Government

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1. Trotter to Jt. Commissioners, 25 July 1833, Para.2, Ibid.

2. Ibid.

in dividing it, while the maintenance of an efficient police force in the Regulation parganas "bordering on Behar, one of the most fertile and populous districts in the country, would not only benefit the inhabitants of those pergunnahs, but materially tend to strengthen the police of the adjoining districts."<sup>1</sup> Nor need Government fear that the same arguments might be used in support of a division of Chota-Nagpur, for "the same facilities do not exist of retaining the latter under the operation of the Regulations on account of its great distance from any established court, and further, that the turbulent disposition which has lately been displayed by the inhabitants of the latter, and has been the immediate cause of the change of system, has never manifested itself, nor do I believe exists in the least degree in the portion of Ramghur now alluded to."<sup>2</sup>

Those areas of the Ramgarh district not transferred to the new Political Agent should, Trotter thought, be allotted to Gaya. The one exception might be pargana Kharak-diha, the lands of which had come into the possession "of Mahajuns and other monied men from zillah Bihar, and elsewhere, who have now become the principal landowners ... by taking land in security for money but at exorbitant rates of interest to the old occupants by whom they are regarded with the same jealousy and dislike, as the Suds by the inhabitants

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1. Ibid. Para.3.

2. Ibid.

of Chota Nagpore."<sup>1</sup> In fact, it had been hinted to him many a time that had the insurgents extended their operations as far as Kharakdiha, whose southern portion was chiefly jungle and hill, the inhabitants would not have hesitated to join them. On this score, he thought that this pargana could be included in the new jurisdiction.

Trotter's views were in the main supported by Cuthbert. But on one point he differed sharply. Trotter had suggested that Kunda and Chakai should remain Regulation, since the malikana (proprietary) allowance from them was received by the Maharaja of Giddhaur. Cuthbert, on the basis of his ten years' experience of Ramgarh district held that the jungly, uncultivated pargana of Kunda, with its scanty and backward population was quite unsuited "for the general Judicial, Revenue and Police systems which I consider unapplicable to their actual grade in the scale of moral improvement."<sup>2</sup> He would like to see all the hill parganas Kharakdiha, Chakai, Kunda and Untari "brought under one uniform system of management, viz., that sanctioned by the resolution of Government under date the 3rd of June last".<sup>3</sup> He was in fact fervent in advocating "that no part of the Hill country, no portion of its population should again be placed under the Regular Adawlut system."<sup>4</sup> The late disturbances, he wrote, "have confirmed me in the opinion as to the

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1. Ibid.

2. Cuthbert to Jt. Commissioners, 1 Aug. 1833, Para.3, B.C.1502/58891.

3. Ibid. Para.5.

4. Ibid.



utter inaptitude of Regulation 2 of 1819 to such wild and barbarous regions. It is the bane of all improvements, tends to unsettle minds of the people by filling them with alarm for the stability of their property and checks that confidence in the justice and beneficence of Governments which it is so desirable should exist in the minds of the hill people, the Regulation should be immediately withdrawn."<sup>1</sup>

Lambert, the Patna commissioner, upheld Cuthbert's views, and suggested that Palamau, "in consideration of the nature of the country and its population and with reference to its situation with regard to pergunnah Chota Nagpore and its dependency pergunnah Toree, and also that Pergunnah Koonda with reference to its adjoining pergunnah Toree as well as to the nature of the country should form a part of the jurisdiction."<sup>2</sup> But in view of Trotter's arguments and of a petition of the inhabitants of Chatra objecting to the inclusion of pargana Ahori and its adjoining areas in the new unit, he thought that the northern portion of Ramgarh might be left under the regulations.<sup>3</sup> He also concurred with Trotter in the suggestion of Kharakdiha being included in the new jurisdiction and of Chakai being transferred to Monghyr. Moreover, he agreed with Dent's proposal to retain Sherghati and other neighbouring parganas under the general regulations.

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1. Ibid. 4. Also see Chapter IV.

2. Lambert to Jt. Commissioners, 9 Aug. 1833, Para.3, B.C.1502/58891.

3. Ibid. Para.4

It was on 6 September 1833 that Dent forwarded these sentiments to the Government. On a consideration of these views he thought that Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies along with the following parganas of Ramgarh might be included in the new jurisdiction: Palamau, Ramgarh, Kodarma, Kunda and Kendi. Chakai should be transferred to Monghyr and Sherghati with the parganas to the west to Bihar district.<sup>1</sup>

About the areas of Midnapur to be included in the new jurisdiction Dent pointed out that though Dick and D'oyly opposed change, Government had already decided to include Dhalbhum in the new administration. Moreover, though Russell thought that only three mahals should be chopped off his district, it was necessary to transfer some other mahals "in order to form a jurisdiction large enough for the services of an additional assistant who will be indispensably required to superintend those tracts, from their being so widely

separated from the other portions of the proposed new district."<sup>2</sup> So he proposed that the following parganas and mahals of the Jungle Mahals should be included in the new arrangement: Bagankodar, Hasla, Jhalda, Torang, Bagmundi, Kasipur, Patkum, Barabhum, Koilapal, Phulkusmā and Shamsundarpur. If these mahals with Dhalbhum were considered sufficient to form a separate jurisdiction, well and good; if not, Raipur, Manbhum and Silda (of Midnapur district) might also

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1. Dent to Govt., 6 Sept. 1833, Para.2, B.C.1502/58891.

2. Ibid. Para.5.

be added to it.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as the proposed jurisdiction would adjoin Singhbhum, the officer in charge of it might have to discharge duties connected with that turbulent area too.

He discounted the arguments put forward by Dick and Nisbet that the inhabitants of transferred areas would suffer by passing outside the civilizing scope of the Regulation system. He pointed out that "If the rules for the administration are framed after the Arracan Rules which probably will be the case, they will embrace the spirit of the General Regulations with the addition of a discretionary power to be vested in the controlling authority which the present circumstances of these countries seem to require."<sup>2</sup> His own long report on the Jungle Mahals disturbances, just submitted, would rather show what havoc the regulations had played in that area.

The new jurisdiction, he thought, should be formed into three subordinate divisions. Ramgarh, Kendi, Kodarma, Kharakdiha and Kunda should be under one assistant residing at Hazaribagh. The second division including Chota-Nagpur and its dependencies and Palamau were to be under another assistant at Lohardugga. If this division was found unmanageable, the northern half of Palamau might be transferred to the Ramgarh division. The third division should comprise Dhalbhum and the parganas of the Jungle Mahals, the Kasai

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.8.

river forming the boundary to the east. A suitable place on the banks of the Subarnarekha might be selected for the station of the third assistant. For the station of the political agent he suggested Amaidanda, Churia or Lohardugga or any other town in Chota-Nagpur, though the final say would lie with Wilkinson.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Dent's final report on the second phase of the unrest had reached Government. In it he made specific suggestions for the future management of the tribal areas. He took particular note of the mode for recovering arrears of revenue and the zamindar's private debts and for making provisions for the maintenance of the younger branches of the chiefs' families. The sale of estate in this area, he thought, was objectionable because the Government had "to force upon the peoples as their Raja, an odious stranger ..."<sup>2</sup> In any case he thought that these estates were not legally liable to sale for the recovery of the private debts of the rajas. Their property, he argued, should be treated as entailed property, the chief having only a life interest in it. Only in case of gross misconduct should an estate be liable to sale. But in that case it should be purchased by the Government with a view to conferring it upon some more deserving relation of a raja.<sup>3</sup>

For the recovery of the arrears in ordinary cases, he

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1. Ibid. Para.8.

2. Dent to Govt., 4 Sept. 1833, Para.64, B.C.1501/58886.

3. Ibid. Para.65.

thought, the estates should be attached and collections made by an officer of the Government until the arrears were realized. He pointed out, however, that on the Jhalda and Chhatna estates being attached, no collections could be made because the lands were generally in the possession of the relations of the zamindars, mortgagees and others. To prevent such difficulties he proposed that all estates should be divided into mal, or revenue, lands, Khas Khambar, or privy purse lands, and lands for the support of members of the chiefly family, Brahmans and others.<sup>1</sup> The lands allotted to the first category should be the most open, best cultivated portion of the estate, capable of yielding net collections exceeding the Government revenue demand by forty or fifty per cent. Such land, ear-marked for meeting the revenue demands, should be left to the free management of the raja, so long as he paid his revenue, except that he should not be allowed to alienate any portion of it.<sup>2</sup> Should revenue payments fall into arrears, the mal villages would be attached, and the tenants ordered to pay direct to the treasury. Only over the privy purse lands would the raja's control be absolute, and only those lands could he sell or mortgage, after informing the European officer in charge of the area.

Dent paid considerable attention to the last division of estate lands, those set aside for the support of the

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1. Ibid. Para. 66.

2. Ibid. Para. 67.



raja's relations, priests, etc. He pointed out that "these grants in all the Jungle Mahals are only considered to be binding on the Raja who makes them, but in general they are confirmed by his successor during the lifetime of the original grantee, except where, as in many of the Mahals, there is an estate specially set apart for the maintenance of the eldest brother of the Raja who is styled variously 'Kower' and 'Hakeem' in which case on a new succession the new Kower succeeds to it as a matter of course & the former Kower is otherwise provided for."<sup>1</sup> Such grants, Dent suggested, should be made by the raja in consultation with his relations. If a difference of opinion developed, the European officer or a neighbouring raja might be asked to arbitrate. He also emphasised the importance of redressing the grievances of the ghatwals, upon whose interests likewise the zamindars and chiefs must not be allowed to encroach by irregular demands and alienations. "It is of the most vital importance," Dent wrote, "to the general peace of the district and the maintenance of an efficient police that these Jageers should not in any way be diverted from the purpose for which they were originally granted, either by fraudulent alienations of the Ghatwals themselves or the encroachments of the zemindars and others which are now daily taking place."<sup>2</sup> He suggested that all the ghatwali tenures should be carefully surveyed

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1. Ibid. Para.69.

2. Ibid. Para.75.

and recorded, the occupants, extent and site of lands and amount of rent payable being all specified.<sup>1</sup>

Dent also returned to the question of the excise and salt duties. He did not wish to go the whole way with Wilkinson, and abolish the tax on hanria or pachai entirely, because he thought it would be difficult to institute a new tax in its place. What he did wish to see was a low rate, simply applied: eight annas on a village with 16 houses or less, one rupee on all larger villages. The farms of the abkari collections should be small, and residents should be preferred to strangers as their farmers. The abuses in the salt department he thought more serious. In Dhalbhum, he said, they were "of an extremely oppressive character and the patience with which these and other grievances were borne for a long time, affords a strong proof of the forbearance of the inhabitants."<sup>2</sup> He emphasized "the injustice and impolicy of keeping up the Dhalboom and Burabhoom salt chokies, which, in conjunction with the chokey in Chota Nagpore (whose authority extends from Patcoom to Surgooja over a frontier considerably upwards of 100 miles in extent) are ... to prevent the introduction of Cuttack salt into Bengal or South Bihar."<sup>3</sup> Even under the most vigilant control and supervision, the chokey officers, from the very nature and discretion of their duties, harassed the people in various ways. To

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.76.

3. Ibid. Para.77

prevent this abuse, he suggested that the price of salt sold for export from Cuttack might be increased to the level of the Calcutta price. This would put an end to the vast expenditure on chaukis, and even add to Government receipts from the Cuttack Tributary Mahals. It would involve some extra cost to the inhabitants of the tributary states, but even then they would get their salt cheaper than the people of Chota-Nagpur and the Jungle Mahals now did.

Then Dent took up the question of police for the Jungle Mahals. The rules in Regulation XVIII of 1805, he thought, were "well adapted to these Jungle Mahals; and where the Raja or his Dewan has been duly qualified they have fully answered in practice and crimes of violence and bloodshed have greatly decreased."<sup>1</sup> The only change he suggested was to make the raja's diwan and other efficient zamindar's servants, jointly responsible with the raja for the due performance of their duty as police officers. The magistrate was to advise the zamindars to remove improper or incapable men from his services.

Two last suggestions Dent made were typical of his attitude. He urged that Bengali, the colloquial language of the hill areas should be substituted for Persian in all public offices, and he requested the Government to open a good school for the children of the jungle zamindars. Even with the limited society of Bankura it would only require a

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1. Ibid. Para.79.

small monthly donation from Government to support an institution which "would do infinitely more to civilize and improve the people than the best system of management."<sup>1</sup>

With the replies to their proposals of 3 June for reorganization of the administration before them, and a reminder of the urgent need for reform to hand from Dent, the Bengal Government proceeded to take action.<sup>2</sup> On 22 December 1833, the Government announced that "considerations connected with the present state of certain tracts of country now included in the Districts of Ramghur, Jungle Mahals and Midnapore, the nature of the disturbances which recently prevailed in various parts of those districts, and the character of the inhabitants had rendered it expedient to separate these tracts," and proceeded to pass a Regulation for "abolishing the Courts of Dewanny Adawlut of the Zillahs of Ramghur, Jungle Mahals and Midnapore."<sup>3</sup> The tracts included in the new charge were, in the Ramgarh district, Chota-Nagpur, Palamau, Kharakdiha, Ramgarh and Kunda, in the Jungle Mahals all the mahals except Sainpahari, Shergarh and Bishrupur, in Midnapur Dhalbhum. The new jurisdiction was placed under an officer to be denominated Agent to the Governor General, who would administer justice and superintend the police and revenue services under rules to be framed.

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1. Ibid. Para.80.

2. They would have liked to have had Wilkinson's comments on Dent's report on the Jungle Mahals unrest, but Wilkinson felt that he was not yet sufficiently informed to pass comment. Wilkinson to Govt., 14 Nov. 1833, B.C.1501/58886.

3. Regulation XIII, 2 Dec. 1833, B.C.1502/58891.

for the area. Those parts of Regulation III, 1793, and Regulation XVIII, 1805, and all other regulations which had applied to the area were rescinded.

Until detailed instructions had been issued by the Government, the Agent and his subordinates were to be guided by the rules in force for the conduct of all local duties at the moment. The Agent would exercise the same power and authority for the time being as were vested in a commissioner of revenue and circuit and a civil and sessions judge. Until otherwise directed, he and his assistants would be subordinate to, and would conform to all orders from the Sadr Diwani Adalat and Nizamut Adalat, the Sadr Board of Revenue and the Board of Customs, salt and opium, as heretofore. But these Courts and Boards would not normally interfere in the affairs of the Agency, and their powers of control would be ordinarily exercised by the Agent over his Assistants. Only one annual report would be ordinarily required from this area.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus decided the fate of the tribal people of this "wild, imperfectly civilized, and occasionally very disturbed" hilly and jungly area, the Government appointed Captain Wilkinson as the Political Agent on the South-West Frontier on a consolidated salary of Rs.36,000. Lt. R. Ouseley of the 50th Regt. N.I. and Ensign P. Nicolson of the 28th were appointed as his first Assistants at Rs.1,000 a

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1. Governor - General, Minute, 6 Dec. 1832, B.C.1502/58891.



month, and Assistant Surgeon Davidson a junior assistant with the salary of a senior assistant because of his "superior abilities".<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that no civilian officer was preferred for this area. The criterion seems to have been efficiency as a military officer in suppressing the unrest.

A number of consequential changes and adjustments followed from the creation of the Agency. Capt. Wilkinson was relieved from the command of the Ramgarh battalion, which was moved further south, towards the centre of the lately disturbed area. Bentinck also recommended that a regiment of native infantry should be stationed at Bankura, and he wondered whether an European regiment might not be conveniently stationed at Hazaribagh.<sup>2</sup>

Copies of the new Regulation and Rules were sent to all the commissioners and other officers concerned, and to the register of the Sadr Diwani and Nizamat Adalat.<sup>3</sup> The Ramgarh judge was informed that those areas of his district not included in the Agency would go to Bihar and Bhagalpur, and he was to dispose of all cases pending so that his court could be abolished. It would be his task, being in charge of the establishment and records to transfer all papers relating first to cases pending and then to all former cases of the area.<sup>4</sup> Similar instructions were issued to Trotter, the

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Govt. to Commissioners, Patna, Burdwan, Cuttack and Monghyr and others, B.C.1502/58891.

4. Govt. to S.R.Davidson, 9 Dec. 1833, Ibid.

officiating magistrate and collector. He was placed in charge of the districts transferred to Bihar, and ordered to maintain the records of those areas. He was also to remain responsible for the prisoners at Sherghati.<sup>1</sup> Further orders dealt with the nomination of munsifs for the transferred areas, and for the disposal by sadr amins of the cases transferred to Bihar and Bhagalpur.

Similar arrangements had to be made, after consultation between Capt. Wilkinson and the judges and magistrates concerned, for the Jungle Mahals areas which were to be transferred to Burdwan.<sup>2</sup>

Within the Agency<sup>3</sup> the existing establishments of munsifs, police and revenue officers were to remain for the present and the principal sadr amin, sadr amin and the munsifs were to continue to perform the same duties for the time being. But it was left to the Agent to limit their duties or to discharge any part of those establishments. Moreover, he was authorized to employ new men in such posts

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1. Govt. to Trotter, 9 Dec. 1833, Ibid.

2. Govt. to Dick, 9 Dec. 1833, Ibid.

3. Also see Govt. to Nisbet, 9 Dec. 1833, Ibid.

3. Wilkinson was asked to settle with the Burdwan Commissioner what should be done with regard to the town of Bankura, situated partly in the Regulation pargana of Bishnupur, and partly in Chhatna pargana, which formed part of the Agency. They agreed in December 1833, to include Bankura and three adjacent villages in the Agency. P.E. Patton to Wilkinson, 30 Dec. 1833, Ibid. Also see Govt. to Wilkinson, 15 Jan. 1834, B.C.1502/58892.

if he thought it necessary, submitting a detailed statement of the establishment which he wanted to retain permanently. Similar stop-gap arrangement was to be made for the custody of prisoners, the protection of treasure and other purposes, while he formulated suggestions for adoption permanently.<sup>1</sup>

The joint commission was now to be wound up, its records being transferred to Wilkinson, who would arrange for the transfer.<sup>2</sup> Dent was to dispose of the arrears of business immediately to await further instructions.<sup>3</sup>

Thus by the middle of December 1833, all preliminary consultations had been completed and Capt. Wilkinson<sup>4</sup> had emerged as the sole official head of the new administration. He was to set up a paternalist non-regulation system of administration for this undeveloped area, at the apex of which he would stand with very considerable powers. The swing of the pendulum away from the complex machinery and regulations of ~~the~~ Cornwallis was complete.

The new Agency was carved into three divisions: Manbhum, consisting of those parts <sup>of the Jungle Mahals</sup> which had been de-regulationised, along with Dhalbhum; Lohardugga comprising Chota-Nagpur, including Tori, Barwa and the five dependent parganas

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1. Govt. to Wilkinson, 9 Dec. 1833, Para.13, Ibid.

2. Ibid. Para.14.

3. Govt. to Dent, 9 Dec. 1833, B.C.1502/58891.

4. It may be noted that besides possessing experience of the Deccan and of this tribal area, he was also an intimate friend of Major Benson, the private secretary to the Governor-General, and of Major Sutherland, the private secretary to Metcalfe.

of Rahi, Silli, Tamar, Bundu and Baranda below the ghats, and Palamau; Hazaribagh comprising Ramgarh, Kharakdiha and other estates of the Ramgarh district withdrawn from the operation of the regulations but not included in the second division. Nicolson was appointed in the first, Ouseley at Lohardugga and Davidson at Hazaribagh.<sup>1</sup> These assistants were provided with necessary instructions for their guidance in civil and criminal justice. They were charged with the performance of all the duties previously performed by the magistrates and collectors of their respective areas, hearing appeals from the court of the principal sadr amins, sadr amins and munsifs.<sup>2</sup> (A number of these were however discharged or transferred because of their record during the unrest.) They were to be guided by Regulation X of 1829 in the collection of stamp duties, were to pay special attention to the eradication of abuses in the abkari department, and to collect the many arrears of land revenue, keeping a close watch upon the activities of the sazawals managing estates for minors under the Court of Wards.<sup>3</sup> They also received detailed instructions about the building of suitable jails, the housing of the detachments of troops posted at their headquarters, the proper payment of villagers living near the Benares road who did coolie and carting services, and had often not been paid. But in addition to these and

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1. Wilkinson to Nicolson, Ouseley and Davidson, 7 Jan. 1834, B.C.1502/58892.

2. Wilkinson to Nicolson, 7 Jan. 1834, Ibid.

3. Ibid.

many other detailed and local orders, Wilkinson laid down for his assistants certain general rules. In these the influence of Elphinstone or Munro seems very complete. Wilkinson clearly had what, in another connection has been described as "the classic idea of the Collector of the Munro school - the man with wide discretionary powers, constantly travelling about his district, unhampered by forms and ceremonies, always and everywhere accessible to anyone with a complaint or petition."<sup>1</sup>

Wilkinson laid much stress upon his assistants' annual tour of their divisions. The assistant was to halt for four or five days at convenient distances, inviting all the heads of estates and villages to meet him, and conversing on their own affairs and those of their neighbours. Thus in course of a year or two he would "become intimately acquainted with the state of your district and condition of its inhabitants."<sup>2</sup> Prior to undertaking such a tour, the officer was to get an English or Persian list prepared of every person's name whom he had to contact. He was to send for most of them, and others were to be contacted in course of a morning or evening stroll: "you should send for as many of them as you could conveniently converse with, and when alone

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1. Ballhatchet, Social policy, 104.

2. Wilkinson to Nicolson, 7 Jan. 1834, Para.14, B.C.1502/58892. Elphinstone had also "urged his Collectors to 'move about the country', granting 'easy access to all comers, and a ready ear to all complaints':" Circular, 10 July 1818, Ballhatchet, Social Policy, 104.



in your morning or evening walks or before breakfast when sitting in front of your tent, or after dinner, talk with them freely, and encourage them to speak of the manner they had been treated, by the Darogah, Moonsif, Peeadas and Chupprassies or by your own amlah if they had been to the Suddar station."<sup>1</sup> Such heart to heart talk would go a long way in removing the fears of the people and would put a stop to the oppressions of the petty officials. (If charges of oppression were proved, the guilty were to be given an exemplary punishment.) "At these conversations with the people," Wilkinson went on, "you should not allow any of your Umlah, Chupprassies or private servants to be near you, and whenever a distinct accusation is made against any of the public officers, chupprassees &ca &ca, you should consider it your duty not to leave the odium of prosecuting him to the person who informs, but search for evidence and on conviction of bribery, exaction &ca &ca punish the delinquent, of whatever grade in the manner authorized in Smyth's penal code. A few examples thus made will operate as a check on your Establishment and be otherwise productive of the best effects."<sup>2</sup> The same course was to be followed at his sadr station also.

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1. Wilkinson to Nicolson, 7 Jan. 1834, Para.14, B.C.1502/58892. The postscript of the letter stated, "you should not only make enquiries about your own umlah but mine - and that of other assistants, and if you hear that in any one of our Establishments, one man is corrupt or that they are generally so, you will consider it your Duty to make the same known to me immediately."
  2. Ibid. Para.14.

To check bribery, the amlas were to be strictly prohibited from receiving at their houses any persons who had business in the court. All letters and reports were to be opened and read in the presence of the assistant, and the readers were to be frequently changed to avoid corruption.

The opinion of the amla was never to be asked about a case in the presence of the parties, and if voluntarily offered, the amla was to be scolded. In other words, the public should never have the impression that the officer was in any way influenced by his amla.<sup>1</sup>

To Nicolson Wilkinson wrote that he should not mind working longer than the usual hours: "We have not been selected for our situations for the purpose of working only a given number of hours according to rule, but to afford speedy and cheap justice to all who may appeal to us, and the latter can never be accomplished until we effectively put a stop to our Umlah's receiving anything from those who come to our courts, whether as Nuzzurs, Salamie, Bribes &ca."<sup>2</sup> Eternal vigilance and superhuman effort would be necessary to clear this Augean stables, without them the rules would be dead letters: "Rules without constant watchfulness and great diligence are not of much use. It is therefore to your exertions and that of the other assistants

1. Ibid. Para. 15.

2. Ibid. Para. 16. No doubt the strain would be great, but Wilkinson wanted <sup>them</sup> to live up to the ideal of an Elphinstone, a Munro and a Metcalfe.

that I must look for improvement in the management of the country and condition of the people in the new jurisdiction, as I do so with confidence."<sup>1</sup>

To bring justice to the door of the people, the assistant on tour was to decide pending cases at places where parties and witnesses could conveniently assemble. Moreover, during these tours when the people would gather at the assistant's camp, "the most extensive use of Punch-ayats" should be made.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, to check the corruption in the courts of justice, the jamadar, who was to be appointed in the place of a nazir, would distribute and receive back the notices, summons, etc, (to the chaprasis, peadas, etc.) in the cutchery itself, maintaining a register and reporting to the assistant daily. No such business was to be transacted out of court. This would prevent the jamadar from stepping into the shoes of the nazir, who had often become famous for his malpractices.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the peadas were also to be prevented from exacting money from the parties in a suit. All ordinary witnesses were to be reported to the assistant as soon as they arrived. If they arrived at night, the peada must bring them to the cutchery near which a shed would be erected for their shelter. The jamadar, on his

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1. Ibid. Para.17.

2. Ibid. Para.18. cf. Elphinstone's emphasis on panchayats.

3. Ibid. Para.20.

arrival at the cutchery, was to take note of their attendance and to report it to the assistant. Respectable witnesses, however, might be allowed to stay at night at any private house, not being that of a plaintiff or a defendant in the suit.<sup>1</sup> Also, the peadas were to be strictly prohibited from overstaying in the countryside where they went to deliver notice of cases.<sup>2</sup> For this, a scale of distances of the different parganas was to be prepared, and a peon was to be expected to travel six kos a day, beyond which he should be asked to explain for any delay. Not only this, the jamadar and the peadas were to have no connection with money transactions such as payment of subsistence money to witnesses.<sup>3</sup>

To avoid unnecessary delay in a suit and to see that the amlas did not fraudulently cause such a delay, the assistant was to maintain an English and a Bengali register of suits and to devote an hour a week in the presence of the parties or their agents over the register to discover what delay in the suits had been caused. The treasurer was to receive and take charge of the revenue and stamps and the money was to be forwarded to the agent's treasury.<sup>4</sup>

It was also laid down that vakils (pleaders) were not to be allowed to plead within any of the courts of the Agency. The parties could conduct their business in the Courts either in person or by mukhtar or authorized agent.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid. Para.19.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Para.21.

4. Ibid. Para.23.

5. Ibid. Para.24.

The next step taken by Wilkinson was to draw up, and on 13 January to forward for approval proposed rules for the administration of criminal justice in the Agency.

He suggested that the Agent should ordinarily possess the powers of control of the Nizamat Adalat over his assistants and other officials subordinate to him. He should be free to give sentences of up to fourteen years' hard labour in irons; more severe sentences would require the sanction of the Nizamat Adalat. His assistants should have power to award hard labour in irons for up to two years, corporal punishment not exceeding thirty strokes of the rattan and fines of up to two hundred rupees, or a further year's imprisonment in default of payment. Higher sentences would require the approval of the Agent. The tribal rulers, rajas, zamindars and jagirdars might investigate petty cases, abusive language, slander, minor assaults arising in their estates. They, however, would not have power to award any punishment.

The assistants would be "empowered to receive and investigate all complaints, information or charges brought before them of crimes or misdemeanours committed within the limits of their respective jurisdictions."<sup>(1)</sup> The

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(1) Enclosure 48, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892. Rules for Arakan served as the model for these rules. For Arakan rules see Beng.Cr. Judl. Cons. 26 of 3 July 1828 (138/66).



tribal chiefs could investigate complaints, receive and forward a razinama if attested by two witnesses. Complaints made to the assistants were to be written and on oath, those to chiefs could be either written or verbal.

For serious crimes the assistant would issue a warrant for the apprehension of the accused, for minor ones merely a summons. Both might be served either through the raja or other chief, or through the jamadar of the court. A person refusing to answer a summons might be arrested by the local chief and forwarded to the appropriate authority.

The examination of the prosecutor, and of all witnesses in the assistants' court would be on oath, the answer of the defendant without, though recorded. The assistant would carefully examine any confessions to make sure they were voluntary and not made either under threat or upon promise of pardon or a reduced sentence. In no case would the statements or confessions of one or more prisoners be admitted to convict another without further proof. All depositions would be in Hindustani or Bengali and would require to be witnessed. (1)

Those who preferred groundless or vexatious complaints might be fined up to fifty rupees or imprisoned for up to three months. No one might be punished on mere suspicion,

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(1) Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.



or placed in preventive detention, except on proof of notorious bad character. Even then one year would be the maximum period of detention.

In serious cases examined before the assistant indigent witnesses would be paid a subsistence allowance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  annas a day during their attendance in court. Similarly prisoners on release from jail would be given subsistence money for their journeys home. In cases investigated by the local chiefs the complainant would be responsible for supporting poor witnesses. (1)

All sentences would be carried into effect by the agent in the manner prescribed for a judge of circuit. He was empowered with or without a petition being preferred to him to call for the proceedings of his assistants in any cases decided by them, and he could mitigate or remit any punishment. He would submit periodical reports with statements of the crimes committed, the number of persons apprehended, convicted and sentenced, the nature of punishments inflicted, the amount of fines levied by the several courts. Without his confirmation, the assistants would not impose any fine exceeding Rs. 200, while the agent himself would not impose any fine exceeding Rs. 500

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(1) Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.



without the confirmation of the Government. It would be the agent again who would regulate the mode of employing the prisoners and the place of their confinement. He would require from his assistant periodical reports of the number of persons apprehended and discharged as well as of those in confinement, and he would carefully inspect the jail and places of custody and would issue necessary instructions for the proper and humane treatment of the prisoners.<sup>(1)</sup>

The salient features of the proposed system were once again the creation of a hierarchy of authority, with powers and responsibilities clearly defined at each level, and the agent at the apex of the pyramid, and the creation of elaborate safeguards against the abuse of authority. The provisions for the payment of subsistence allowances were particularly aimed at making an appearance in a court of law no longer in itself a source of loss and injury. The one surprising omission was the absence of any reference to the use in criminal cases of panchayats, for in his earlier reports Wilkinson had emphasised the need to recognize these ancient tribal tribunals.

Much the same features were evident in the rules proposed for the administration of civil justice. There

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(1) Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.



were special safeguards in cases involving the defendants of tribal chiefs, Americans or Europeans, or rent-free lands. All suits were to be tried and decided openly. Summons to attend court in person, nominally served through the village headman, would be returnable with an endorsement certifying the manner in which they had been served. Ample warning would be given to the parties of the day on which the suit would be heard, and in case of illness or disability of witnesses their depositions might be taken by the nearest munsif or daroga. Ex-parte trials might be held if after three weeks the defendants had failed to answer a summons, but the approval of an assistant would be required before a munsif might try a suit ex-parte, as well as proof that the summons had actually been served on the defendant. (1)

To prevent frivolous litigation complaints would be submitted on stamped paper, and if a suit was shown to have been instituted groundlessly a fine or moderate term of imprisonment might be imposed. Complaints regarding balances or undue exaction of rent, or dispute regarding revenue accounts would, however, not need to pay stamp duty, so that even the poorest tribal cultivator would not be

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(1) Rules for civil justice, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.



denied justice because of his poverty.<sup>(1)</sup>

Every decree in a suit would specify the names of the witnesses who had deposed, the amount or value of the property decreed, the costs of the suit, and whether they were to be defrayed by any party. But no fees or costs whatever would be levied, except such as might be authorized by the rules or by special order of the Government.<sup>(2)</sup> Copies of the decrees would be provided within ten days after the decision.

In all cases the parties could appeal from the munsif's court to the assistant's court and from there to the agent's court, within six weeks of the date of the decree, specifying the grounds of their dissatisfaction on a stamped paper. Moreover, any case could be transferred from a lower court by the assistant or the agent on sufficient grounds. Decrees would be executed by an order addressed to an officer of the court, or the headman of the estate in which the debtor might usually reside, or where the property might be situated. The rajas and other chiefs might be exempted by the agent from attachment and sale of property, arrest and imprisonment in satisfaction of the decree.<sup>(3)</sup> The agent could afford

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(1) Rules for civil justice, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.



relief to insolvent debtors or their sureties who might have no means of discharging the amount. But if subsequently such people acquired property, it could be brought to sale on an application by the creditor.

Persons confined in civil jail in execution of a decree would receive a daily subsistence allowance of two annas, to be paid through an officer of the court, by the party at whose suit the debtor had been confined. One month's subsistence allowance would be realised in advance in default of which the prisoner would be released forthwith. Moreover, no person would be liable to personal confinement in satisfaction of a decree, for any sum not exceeding fifty rupees, beyond a period of six months, at the expiration of which he would be released. However, any personal property of such a person would be liable to sale in the execution of the judgment. The poor debtor was thus given all possible relief.<sup>(1)</sup>

One of the most significant features of Wilkinson's proposals was for the use of panchayats in civil cases. Their use had already been a feature of Elphinstone's administration in the Bombay Presidency,<sup>(2)</sup> and it is very

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(1) Rules for civil justice, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.

(2) Ballhatchet, Social policy, 106-109.



likely that it was Wilkinson's long stay at Nagpur, one of the former centres of Maratha power, which had turned his attention to their possible utility.

Wilkinson suggested that he and his assistants should have the right to refer suits at their discretion for decision by panchayats, after the plaint had been filed and the defendant's answer received. A panchayat would consist of three to five persons to be selected by the agent or the assistant from ~~q~~ amongst the persons most conversant with the matter at issue.<sup>(1)</sup> The Panches would be nominated after the plaintiff, defendant and witnesses had assembled, and the parties would have a right to challenge a panch, and their grounds being valid, that panch would be replaced. But before constituting a panchayat, the parties would have to execute a bond that they would abide by its decision. A mohurir would be attached to every panchayat to record the proceedings and award. Its proceedings would be held in a part of the cutchery or a spot adjoining it. After taking evidence the panchayat would direct the mohurir and the parties to retire, and then it would consult and decide on the award. After that the mohurir would be recalled to record the decision, which, along with the signature of the

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(1) Cf. Elphinstone had also emphasised the Panches' knowledge of the matter at issue and of the personal character of the parties. Ibid, 109.



members of the panchayat, would be delivered to the court, which would pass a decree in conformity with this award. This would be appealable or liable to be set aside only if corruption would be proved against the panchayat, or if its decision would be contrary to the common law of the country or to the rules enacted by the Governor-General in council. (1)

In case of a boundary dispute between two villages situated within a single estate, the panchayat would be selected from amongst most influential and respectable men of adjacent villages within the estate. They would decide the dispute after careful investigation of the boundaries and would fix permanent boundary marks. Where the dispute was between zamindars or jagirdars, both holding their estates from the same superior, then the panchayat would be constituted of leading zamindars or jagirdars of the neighbourhood. (2)

In case of a boundary dispute between two large estates, however, Wilkinson doubted the efficacy of such an arbitration. In such cases the agent or an assistant would proceed to the spot, and after a minute investigation,

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(1) Rules for civil justice, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.

(2) Ibid.



pass his decree, appeal lying from an assistant to the agent. In case of a danger to the peace of the country from such a dispute, the matter would be referred to the Governor-General-in-Council. (1)

The agent and his assistants would encourage all persons to refer their disputes to private arbitration or to panchayats so as to avoid cases coming to the court. The parties in a suit would be at liberty to settle their disputes by a razinama or article of agreement at any stage of proceedings in court, and where such a settlement was made before the examination of the witnesses had begun, the stamp fees would be refunded. (2)

By the use of panchayats Wilkinson aimed at expediting justice, and by bringing cases before neighbours, who would know the parties and the circumstances, to prevent vexatious litigation. To the same end he provided that no vakil would be permitted to plead in any of the courts, for in the Regulation provinces intriguing lawyers and mukhtars had done much to promote unnecessary litigation. If mukhtars did conduct business on behalf of parties, they would not be allowed to recover fees through the courts.

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(1) Rules for civil justice, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.

(2) Ibid.



Another salutary rule proposed by Wilkinson was with regard to sale or transfer of land in lieu of rent or debt. Such sales<sup>as</sup> has been seen, had led to recurrent disturbances in Pachet, Raipur and other parganas and Dent had already drawn the attention of the Government to this problem. Now it was proposed "to prevent the sale, transfer or mortgage of lands, which whether hereditary or not, are considered so by the holders, who would themselves hereafter, even if consenting to transfer, sale or mortgage, or whose heirs would (a favourable opportunity offering) make an effort to recover them by violent measures; also to check the Jungle Rajahs, jagirdars and zemindars from involving themselves in debt, which by mortgage &c &c they have a facility of doing." (1)

Wilkinson proposed that no transfer of land on account of claims for rent, etc., would be legal unless previously authorized by the agent or assistant, by a certificate upon the back of the bond. Moreover, it should be widely announced that in future consent to the sale, transfer or mortgage of landed property long held by rajas, jagirdars and other proprietors would normally be withheld. (2)

The Bengal Government approved of Wilkinson's

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(1) Rules for civil justice, Enclosure, Wilkinson to Govt., 13 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.

(2) ibid.



arrangement for the conduct of judicial business. They slightly modified his proposed rules for criminal justice, and in enlarging the supervisory and reviewing role of the agent, and in providing for more ready appeal from the decisions of assistants. The penalties for vexatious litigation were considerably increased. Consideration of his rules for civil justice was, however, deferred, as at that time new regulations on that subject were in preparation, many of which, they said, "will be applicable to your jurisdiction, and it will be easy to add any that may be specially applicable to that territory, as well as to exclude from operation such as may be inapplicable."<sup>(1)</sup>

These modifications did not change the spirit of Wilkinson's proposals. There was increased emphasis on the existing regulations as guides to both the agent and his assistants, but the rules for Arakan, which had served as a model for Wilkinson, had themselves presupposed the retaining of the spirit of the regulations, though the complexities were avoided as far as possible. As for the rules for civil justice, those prepared by Wilkinson in fact were put into operation, for the Government did not pass the contemplated bill on the subject,<sup>(2)</sup> and in the

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(1) Govt. to Wilkinson, 17 Feb. 1834, Para. 4, B.C. 1502/58892.

(2) Reid, Ranchi Settlement Report, Para. 56.



absence of new Regulations, Wilkinson's simple code guided the courts of the Agency until the passing of the Civil Procedure Code (Act VIII) in 1859. The prohibition of sale, transfer or mortgage of land for arrears of rent or debt thus continued until 1859. What is more, Act VIII, recognising the continued validity of the arguments for that prohibition, laid down that "no sale of land shall be made in the districts of Hazaribagh, Lohardaga and Manbhum, without the sanction of the Commissioner of the province."<sup>(1)</sup> Even when Act X of 1877, the Code of Civil Procedure, came into force, the rule was confined by notifications for Hazaribagh, Lohardugga, Dhalbhum, and the non-Bengali parts of Manbhum.<sup>(2)</sup> It was not until 1882 that these restrictive safeguards were abandoned. Thus Wilkinson's salutary rule safeguarded the tribal people for a quite long time. In 1853 the Assistant of the Lohardugga division reported that from the constitution of the Agency to that date no instance of the sale of land in execution of a decree had been recorded.<sup>(3)</sup>

On 15 January 1834 the South-West Frontier Agency was finally inaugurated.<sup>(4)</sup> On 6 March Wilkinson established

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(1) Reid, Ranchi Settlement Report, Para. 58.

(2) Ibid. Para. 59.

(3) Ibid. Para. 60.

(4) Russell to Govt., 15 Jan. 1834, B.C. 1502/58892.



his new headquarters at Barkagarh, in the centre of his charge.<sup>(1)</sup> The inauguration of the Agency marked the beginning of a twenty year period of peace in the tribal area, a peace made complete after the incorporation of Singhbhum in the Agency in 1837.

The Court of Directors readily approved the judicious step of the Bengal Government in "exempting from the operation of the Regulations the whole range of the disturbed districts and placing them under a special commissioner."<sup>(2)</sup> They also approved the appointment of Wilkinson to that post "for the duties of which, his personal character and his recent experience would seem to render him eminently qualified."<sup>(3)</sup> Moreover, they approved the general instructions of the Bengal Government and of Wilkinson to his subordinates: "We observe from the tenor of his directions to his Assistants, that he justly regards it as his own and their first duty to come into immediate communication with the people for the purpose of acquiring a knowledge of their real sentiments, and of promoting their welfare."<sup>(4)</sup> Last, but not least, they

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(1) Wilkinson to Govt., 1 March 1834, Ibid.

(2) Court of Directors to Bengal Govt., 16 Sept. 1835, Para. 9, India and Bengal Despatches, Vol.6, p.376.

(3) Ibid. p. 377.

(4) Ibid. p. 378.



showed their anxiety to know more about these tribal people and about the redress of their genuine grievances.

In subsequent years Wilkinson and his assistants made the protection of tribal interests even more complete. In October 1834 Wilkinson received permission to interfere whenever the estate of an hereditary proprietor was so deeply involved as to render such interposition desirable."<sup>(1)</sup> Thus he could adjust accounts and regulate interest charges, to release mortgaged property where necessary, and to sequester an estate for the payment of debts. This was so salutary a measure that Dalton, the Divisional Commissioner of Chota-Nagpur declared in 1869 that in the absence of such a power, all the old semi-tribal zamindars would have lost their property in favour of the non-tribal money-lenders. Since the tribal people preferred their own zamindars, "however ignorant, dissipated, extravagant" they were, to the most enlightened of interlopers, Dalton even thought that a law of entail might well have been enforced.<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1838 Dr. Davidson, by then principal assistant, secured the total prohibition of ex-parte decrees, on the very valid grounds that such ignorant persons as mundas,

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(1) Reid, op. cit., Para. 63.

(2) Ibid.



mankis and the ordinary Kols and other tribal folk "would, when served with processes, abscond or conceal themselves, or confess judgment, though the plaintiff had no claim whatever against them, from fear of the courts."<sup>(1)</sup> The wisdom of this measure was realised later when this salutary rule became obsolete after the extension of the Code of Civil Procedure to this area, and the execution of numerous fraudulent ex-parte decrees against the tribal people came to light.<sup>(2)</sup> The Chota-Nagpur tenancy Act of 1908 therefore provided for special action against such frauds.

It was also during the period of the Agency that a police system was worked out. Initially police thanas were established at important places, while the zamindars were put in charge of the police of their own areas, defraying their expenses in the beginning. But later on it was thought expedient to curtail the powers of the zamindars.<sup>(3)</sup>

The salutary rule against the enforced sale of lands for private debt or revenue arrears has already been

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(1) Reid, op. cit., Para 60.

(2) Ibid., Para. 66.

(3) In Dhalbhum in 1855 and in Chota-Nagpur in 1863 the zamindars were finally divested of their police powers.



referred to. In 1853, Ricketts, a member of the Board of Revenue, severely criticized the uncertain and mischievous system whereby, in effect, landowners were protected from all creditors by the fear that otherwise they would stir up their ignorant tribal ryots to resistance and rebellion. Reid, in the Ranchi Settlement Report, has pointed out how beside the mark were Ricketts' remarks, and how justified Wilkinson's rules were by subsequent experience. After 1882 the free sale of landed property led to a recurrence of serious abuses and of consequent disturbances, such as the Sardari Larai of the eighteen-eighties and the Birsait movement of 1895-1900. By the Chota-Nagpur Tenancy Act "the Government was obliged to give salutary effect to the principles, which the authority of the Agent enforced in the early days of the South-West Frontier Agency." (1)

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(1) Reid, op. cit., Para. 62.



### Conclusion

The tribal unrest on the south-west frontier of Bengal in 1831-1833, was born out of frustration and anger - frustration with the new system of Government and laws, and anger at the people who either enforced them or took undue advantage of them.

The real tragedy of the tribal people of this area was that their chiefs, alienated by their conversion to Hinduism and the English administrators, born and bred in the tradition of agricultural landlordism, had no sympathy with the tradition of tribal ownership of land or idea of peasant proprietorship. That was why the former brought in non-tribal settlers and the latter a complex administrative machinery run by an unsympathetic society. Against these tribal people found no remedy except unrest and violence.

This thesis set out to investigate the origins, nature, pacification and outcome of the unrest. It began with queries about the causes of tension in the tribal mind, of their misapprehensions and proper fears. It becomes clear that from two sides their traditional society was being undermined: custom was being undermined by



contract, a barter economy by a money economy they had not yet learned to handle, divisions of the land determined by tribal custom were replaced by a land<sup>102</sup>-tenant relationship, and tribal solidarity was being destroyed from within by the hinduization of the chiefs, and from without by the pressures of the British raj.

How far these developments could have been checked it is hard to say. One could not surely have wished to see the tribal people completely isolated and preserved as museum or zoo specimens. Yet the introduction of so many new things at the same time and the unthinking effort to 'civilize' them were certainly instrumental in disturbing their minds and upsetting the habits to which they were adjusted.

The events leading to the out-break of the unrest and its spreading so quickly seem to suggest that this grim tragedy could have been avoided if the peculiar problems of this tribal area had been realized earlier because the task of personally administering the area was difficult and unrewarding. The occasional, eccentric officer - and Nathaniel Smith certainly was eccentric - who did seek to interfere often did so without real understanding, and with the best of



intentions, in trying to civilize the tribal people or to correct their 'criminal habits' caused still more harm.

When the disturbances began the Bengal Government did not at first realise that by its own actions - or inaction - it had a partial responsibility for the disaster.

No Governor-General, not even the reforming Bentinck, visited the area. (The Bentinck papers though full of comments by Metcalfe disclose none from Bentinck). Few commissioners or district officers had any personal knowledge of Chota-Nagpur or the Jungle Mahals. So, having in the past been led to believe that the tribal people had no genuine grievances, when they broke out, their violence was attributed to savagery and innate wickedness. Naturally, therefore, a policy of vigorous repression was followed, the whole area was thoroughly sacked and hundreds of insurgents were killed. Only later on when the second phase of the unrest had opened, did they realise that there was something essentially wrong. Only then did they realise that the protests of the tribal people against the sale laws, the excise duty, the cultivation of poppy, etc., were not unjustified. Only then did they take the decisive step of refashioning the administration.



Thus this unrest, which opened the eyes of the Bengal Government to the peculiar administrative problem on the south-west frontier, was a watershed in the history of this area. It made the Government aware of the ineffectiveness - rather futility - of stern measures and reprisals. To that extent the object of the tribal unrest was largely fulfilled.

It may even be argued that less terror and destruction would not have served the purpose. The panic caused in the areas west of this region as far as Benares and in the east of it up to Calcutta certainly had wide repercussions. The reverberations of the tribal naqara were heard as far as Mirzapur in the west, and even the Meerut-observer had to take note of certain events. The many letters which appeared in the Calcutta press also suggests that public opinion was much aroused by events. Not only the radical (e.g. the Bengal Hurkara) but also the Government-sponsored newspaper (e.g. the Calcutta Gazette) of Calcutta admitted that these areas had been utterly neglected by the British Indian administration. There was no map worth the name, no clear idea about the lay out or the potentialities of the hill and jungle. It was from ignorance that so many blunders and



atrocities had been committed. With the new knowledge provided by the constant traversing of the area, the unsuitability of the general regulations for this area was at last clearly revealed.

Fortunately at this time there was a reforming Governor-General, and his Councillors were bitter enemies of the Cornwallis system. Last, but not least, Captain Wilkinson, the Political Agent to the Governor-General on this frontier, who had served for over a decade in the Deccan and had felt the influence of the ideas of Elphinstone, Munro and Malcolm, was able to influence Government decisions through his friends Major Benson and Major Sutherland, who were private secretaries to Bentinck and Metcalfe respectively.

This cumulative influence, popular and official, led to a salutary change, and the tribal people of this area received a welcome relief through Regulation XIII, 1833. The special uncomplicated rules, framed for this area, gave them relief from the corrupt police, law officer and revenue collectors, from the abuses and levies of excise farmers and salt darogas. The money-lenders and merchants also had their claws blunted by the provisions about debt which recognised the



vulnerability of the tribal people, whether raja or ryot. The aloofness of the administration was also done away with by the permanent residence in the tribal areas of the Agent and his assistants, and by the friendly, informal intercourse they permitted on tour. The administration of the law was made far less complex, and by the ban upon vakils and the introduction of panchayats was prevented from becoming an instrument in the hands of the unscrupulous. Not only was the Company's administration thus adapted to tribal needs, and its officers and officials made servants rather than oppressive masters of the tribal people, but the conflicts within tribal society itself were eased. If rajas and lagirdas were saved by Wilkinson and Davidson from the clutches of the moneylender, the mankis and ghatwals, the junior members of chiefly families, and the minor zamindars were saved from oppression by their rajas. The result was twenty years of peaceful development in the Agency. Had the same careful attention to tribal needs been paid in the year after the Mutiny perhaps the agrarian disturbances which began again with the abolition of the Agency in 1854 and the reintroduction of many of the Regulations, and which culminated in the Birsa rising of 1895-1900 might altogether have been avoided.

GLOSSARY

Abkari, Abkarry, Abwab,	The excise. Miscellaneous cesses, imposts, and charges, levied by zemindars and public officers.
Adalat, Adawlut, Amla, Amulah, Omla, Amin, Aumeen,	Lawcourt. The subordinate Indian servants. An Indian official, employed under the civil courts to investigate accounts connected with a suit, to carry out legal processes as a bailiff, etc. Also applied to Indian assistants in the duties of land survey.
Aral, Arral, Arwa, Aruwa,	Temporary huts. Rice cleaned from unboiled paddy (fine rice).
Ashraf, Ashrof, Balwa, Bulwa, Barat, Barkandaz, Burkundauz, Batta, Begar,	Noblemen. A tribal weapon. A bridal procession. A matchlockman, guard, or escort. Discount. Forced labour for which no pay was given.
Bhadon, Bhadow,	The fifth month of the luni-solar year.
Bhagat, Bhandar,	A title of the respectable Oraons. Villages managed by the raja or zemindar himself, not rented or farmed to others.
Bhuinhars,	Original clearers of land among the Mundas.
Bigha, Beegah, Brahmachari, Brahmottar, Brit, Vritti or Britta	A measure of land. A mendicant or an ignorant vagrant. Land granted rent-free to Brahmans. Grant of land or other means of support to anyone, generally for religious purposes.
Bahangi, Buhungi or Bhanghi, Chapراسي, Chupراسي,	Load-carrier. A messenger or courier, usually a public servant.
Chappar, Chuppur, Chatti, Chutti, Chauki, Choukee, Chowky, Chaukidar, Chokeedar. Chuar, Chooar,	A thatch. Outpost. Station of police or customs. A watchman, generally of a village. A thief or a bandit.

Dabbu, Dabu,	A small copper coin of the value of twenty Kas.
Dak,	Postal service.
Dam,	Price, cash.
Daroga, Darogha,	Head of a police, custom or excise station.
Dashahara,	A popular festival in honour of the goddess Durga.
Debottar,	A grant for the worship of God or a gift in the name of God.
Deota, Devata,	A deity.
Des,	Country, province or a district.
Dheori,	Branch of a tree.
Dhoti,	Loin cloth.
Digwar, Diguar,	A watchman in the Jungle Mahals.
Diwan,	A minister, a chief officer of an estate.
Diwani,	Of or relating to a diwan, Civil as opposed to criminal. The right to receive the collections of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa granted to the East India Company in 1765.
Dour, Doura,	To go about.
Dubhashia,	Interpreter.
Ekrarnama, Ikrarnama,	A deed of agreement or assent.
Fakir,	A Muslim religious mendicant, subsisting on alms.
Fasli,	The harvest year, The era originating with Akbar.
Fanjdari,	The office of a magistrate or head of police, or criminal judge.
Fanjdari Adalat,	The chief criminal court.
Fulsa,	A tribal weapon.
Ghar, Ghur,	House.
Ghat, Ghaut,	Mountain pass.
Ghatwal, Ghautwal,	A tribal constable in the Jungle Mahals.
Ghatwali,	A land grant to the Ghatwal.
Ghi, Ghee,	Clarified butter.
Gorait, Goret,	A watchman.
Gorra,	A subdivision of caste, especially among Brahmans.
Gundas,	A tribal weapon.
Gunahgari,	Fine for offence.
Gwala,	Milkman.
Hakim,	Title of the younger brother of the Dhalbum chief.

Hal,	Plough.
Hanria,	Rice beer of the Mundas and Oraons.
Hindustani,	Indian.
Huzur, Hoozoor,	Superior authority.
Ilakadar,	The person who engages, either on his own account or as the representative of others, for the payment of the assessed revenue upon a district or a village.
Ijara,	A farm of land of a village.
Ijaradar,	A farmer of land.
Insaf,	Justice.
Isanavisi, Ism, nawisi,	A list or roll of names.
Jagir,	A conditional or unconditional assignment of land or its revenue.
Jagirdar,	Holder of a jagir.
Jaidad,	An assignment of the revenues of a tract of land for the maintenance of an establishment.
Jama, Jumma,	The rental of an estate, or a holding.
Jamabandi,	Settlement of the amount of revenue assessed upon an estate, a village or district.
Jamadar,	The chief or leader of any number of persons; a native subaltern officer; a police or excise officer.
Kabuliat,	A written agreement, especially one signifying assent, as the counterpart of a revenue lease.
Kam,	Work, service.
Katkenadar,	Farmholder.
Kath,	Catechu.
Kayastha,	A Hindu caste of writers.
Khalsa,	Unfarmed land.
Khas,	Own.
Khillat,	A dress of honour presented by a superior authority to an inferior as a mark of distinction.
Kharposh,	Maintenance grant.
Khutkhattidar,	Original clearers of land in Chota-Nagpur proper.
Kos, Coss,	A measure of distance.
Kunwar,	The chief of an estate, or the son of a chief.
Laya (or Naya),	A village priest among the Bhumijes.



Likhai,	Fee for writing or registering.
Madad,	Assistance, allowance.
Magh,	The 10th month of the Hindu year.
Mahal,	A fiscal division, a department.
Mahajan,	A merchant, a moneylender.
Mahto,	A village headman among the Oraons.
Mahantha,	The head of a Hindu religious establishment.
Mahatran,	Land assigned to religious persons.
Mal,	Public revenue from land.
Malguzari,	Rent.
Mangan,	Gift.
Manjhi,	A tribal title.
Manki,	A circle headman among the Mundas.
Minhai,	Rent-free Tenancy.
Mir,	Chief.
Mog-huli,	Relating to the Moghul rule.
Mohurir,	A clerk, a writer.
Muchalaka,	A written obligation, a bond.
Mukhtar,	An agent, an attorney.
Mukarraridar,	A person holding land at a fixed rate of assessment.
Munda,	A village headman among the Mundas.
Munsif, Munsiff,	An Indian civil judge of the lowest rank.
Mura,	A village headman in Patkum.
Munshi,	A writer.
Mutfurka,	Separate, scattered, miscellaneous.
Mutia,	Retailer of salt.
Nag,	Snake.
Nagara,	Drum.
Nails,	Deputy.
Nazir,	An Inspector, a supervisor, the officer of the court who serves processes, takes depositions, and makes enquiries.
Nazarana, Nazr,	A present.
Nizammat,	The administration of police and criminal law.
Pahan,	The religious head of a Munda village.
Paik,	An armed attendant, a village watchman.
Paikan,	Assignments of land for their maintenance.
Pan,	Betel.
Panchak,	A quit-rent.

Panchayat, Panchayat,	A village court of arbitration.
Pargana,	A fiscal division.
Parha,	A group of Munda villages.
Parwana,	An order.
Pat,	A pass of a hill.
Patta, Pottah,	A deed of lease.
Patti,	A half, a moiety.
Patwari,	A subordinate revenue officer.
Peada,	Peon.
Puchai,	A rice beer.
Pus,	The ninth month of the Hindu calendar.
Patrani,	Chief queen.
Qanungo,	Village and district revenue officers.
Rahdari,	Roadcess.
Raik,	Share.
Rakababandi,	Measurement of land.
Raj,	Estate.
Rasum,	Fees, Customary payments and gratuities.
Rautia,	A horse soldier.
Sadr, Sadar,	Principal.
Sadial,	A kind of ghatwal.
Sahib Log,	Englishmen.
Sahu,	Merchant, moneylender.
Sal,	Teak.
Salami,	A complimentary present.
Sanad,	A grant, a charter.
Sardar, Sirdar,	A tribal chieftain, a man of consequence.
Sanyasi, Sunnyasi,	A hindu mendicant.
Sati,	Burning of the wife with the dead body of her husband.
Sayer,	A variety of taxes and imposts, other than land revenue.
Sazawal,	A native collector of revenue.
Sebundy, Sibundi,	Irregular soldier.
Sewakpatta,	A deed or bond by which a person binds himself to servitude.
Sheristadar, Sarishta-	Record-keeper.
tadar,	Province.
Subah,	A tribal word for foreigner.
Sud or Sad,	A type of coinage.
Sunat, Sonat,	A hindu caste of wine sellers.
Sundis,	

Tabedar,	The lowest grade of ghatwal.
Tahsildar,	A native collector of revenue.
Talabi,	Demand of revenue, salary.
Talbana,	Daily fee to a subordinate officer serving summons.
Taluk,	A form of Jagir.
Taraf,	A fiscal division.
Thakur,	A person of rank.
Thakurbarj,	A temple or a building in which the idol is kept.
Thana,	A police station.
Thanadar,	A daroga.
Thikadar,	Farmer of revenue or excise.
Tilak, Tilauk,	A colour mark on the forehead, installation.
Taidad, Tydaad,	Quantity.
Usana,	Coarse rice.
Vaishnava,	Follower of the Hindu God Vishnu.
Vakil,	Agent.



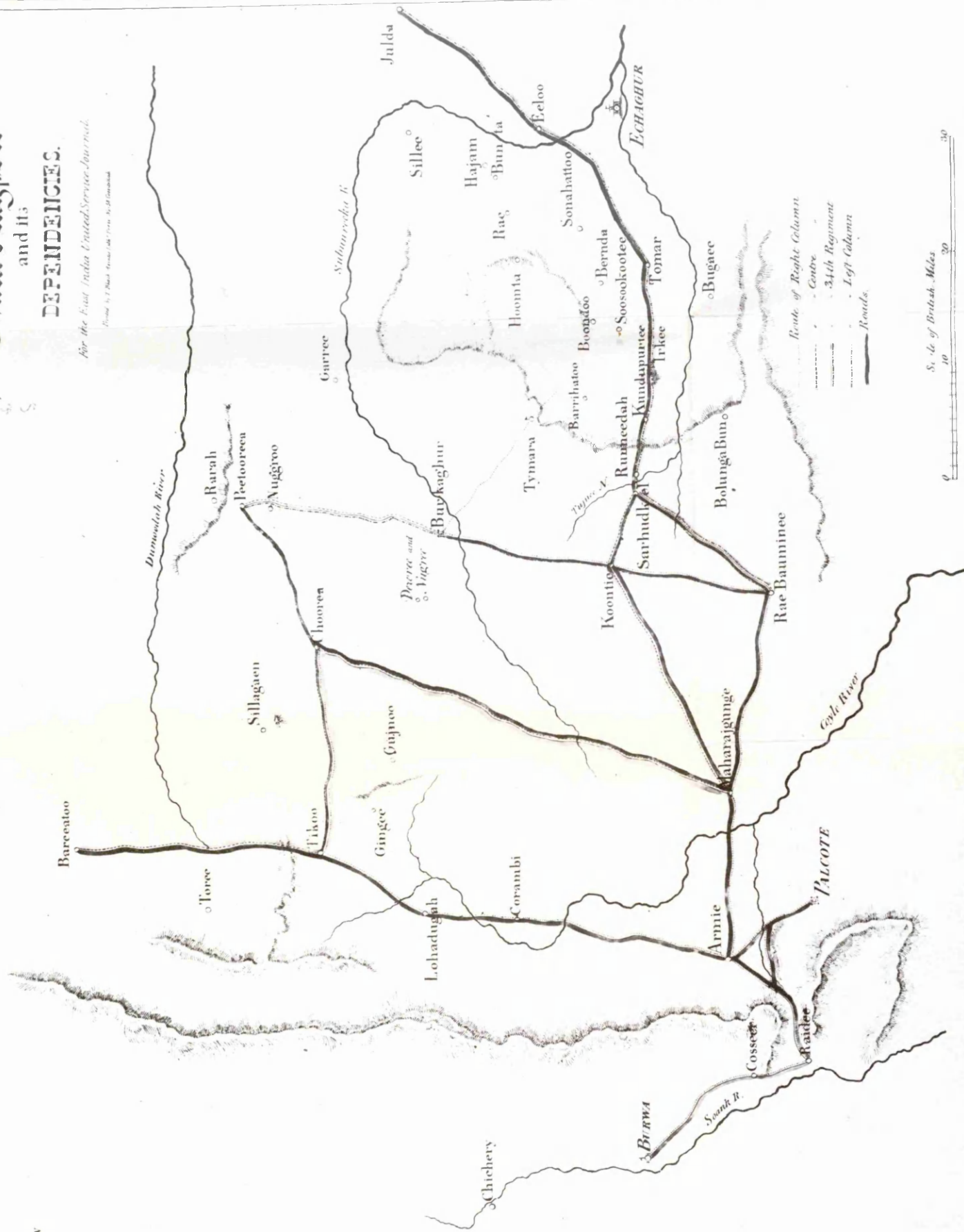
The PROVINCES of  
**B E N G A L,**  
*Situated on the west of the*  
**HOOGLY RIVER:**  
*With the*  
**MAHARATTA FRONTIER.**  
*Ascribed to*  
**HARRY VERELST ESQ.**  
*By his obliged humble servant*  
*J. Rennell.*



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